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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](http://www.elsdon.com/newsletters.htm)):

- 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)
- 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)

In this issue we re-think perspectives about workforce connection and effectiveness with "One-to-One."

## One-to-One

"All of a sudden, after I said I was resigning, I noticed a change in how managers



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

behaved towards me. They became approachable, concerned, and ready to listen. But it was too late.” This is a paraphrase of someone’s comments in a recent exit interview after leaving their organization. In our last newsletter we saw how a person leaving in such a situation today has choices that reach well beyond working in a conventional organizational setting, and that these other choices can offer attractive rewards and low risks. This is a shift from a traditional view of work as a job in an organization. In this issue we explore what we can do from an organizational perspective, to redress this balance, to make it attractive for people to engage in an organization.

Let’s begin by examining the attributes people seek in relationship to their organization, or conversely where a lack of these attributes might cause people to leave. In our studies with more than 1500 people from multiple sectors we find the following broad areas to be most significant, in order of importance:

- Support for individual development
- Positive work environment that values each person’s contribution
- Opportunities to advance and be challenged
- Strong recognition/appreciation
- Open and effective communication
- Competitive compensation

These preferred attributes of the workplace, not surprisingly, speak to our preference to be valued as individuals, supported in our growth and development. This growth and development paves the way for our contributions that are then reinforced by recognition, by communication that is open, direct, personal and two-way and by compensation that reflects these contributions. People vary significantly in their detailed preferences for workplace attributes. So from an organizational viewpoint it is important to characterize the workforce not as a single unit, rather as consisting of many special and different groups with diverse needs and interests.

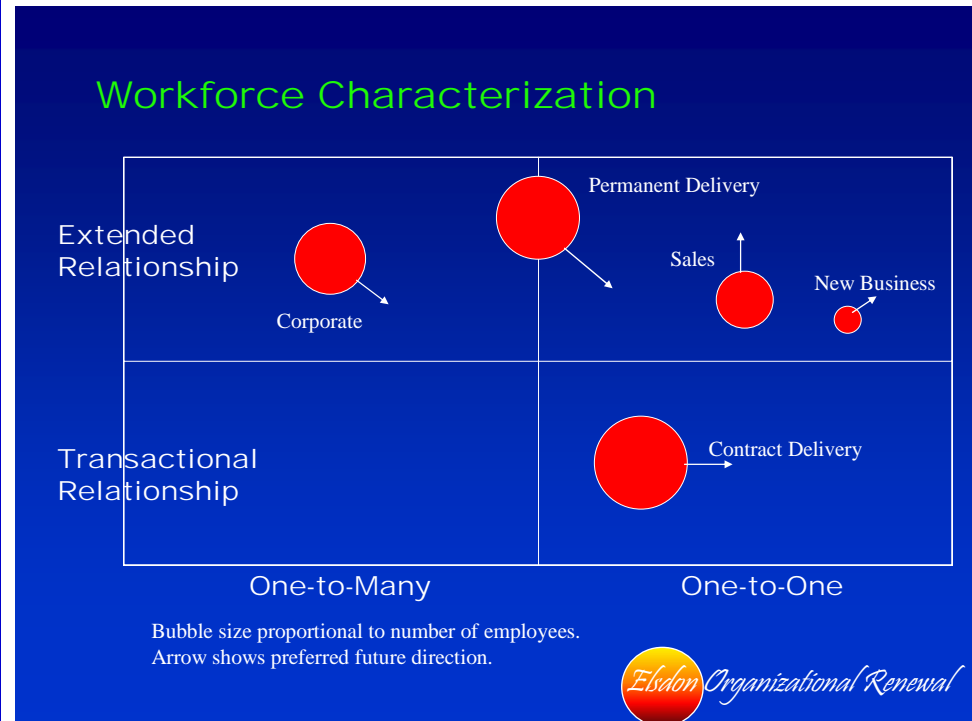
On a practical level for those charged with organizational responsibility, it means understanding the nature of various segments in the workforce and tailoring the organization’s interactions accordingly. This can be as simple as providing part-time work opportunities for those in later career stages, with much experience and little interest in full time work hours. Or providing flexibility in working conditions for those new to the workforce to pursue studies and build their expertise. Strategically this means identifying and understanding the characteristics that differentiate segments of the workforce. There are a number of dimensions that can describe this differentiation in terms of the relationship with individuals, for example:

- Depth, whether the relationship is transactional or extended
- Uniqueness, whether it is one-to-one or one-to-many
- Scope, whether it is autonomous or controlled
- Emphasis, whether focused on development or performance

There are tensions in each of these areas and an opportunity to integrate each aspect. The figure below shows one example of characterizing workforce segments based on the first two dimensions above, depth of relationship and uniqueness of

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.

relationship.



Depth of relationship is shown on the vertical axis. A transactional relationship is one in which individuals contract to complete a certain task in a defined time period in return for financial compensation. It entails limited interaction beyond the defined project, a short time frame and no commitment on the part of the organization to provide development for the individual beyond immediate project learning. An example of this would be an independent contractor who is hired to complete a particular project. There is limited opportunity to develop synergy with staff in the organization, but there is a great deal of flexibility around the relationship following project completion. At that point either party may sever the relationship without obligation to the other.

Contrast this with an extended relationship. Here the engagement is longer term, not limited to a single project. The organization sponsors learning for the individual with the expectation that it will garner the benefits from this learning in the form of increased productivity. Individuals can also experience greater fulfillment in their work lives as their knowledge builds. There is an implied obligation on the part of both the individual and the organization that extends beyond a purely financial transaction.

The second dimension is that of uniqueness, as shown on the horizontal axis in the preceding figure. Whether it is a one-to-many relationship where collective policies dominate, or a one-to-one relationship recognizing the needs of each individual. In the former case there is little flexibility to adjust systems to meet individual needs, in the latter case agreements can be tailored to the mutual needs of each person and the organization.

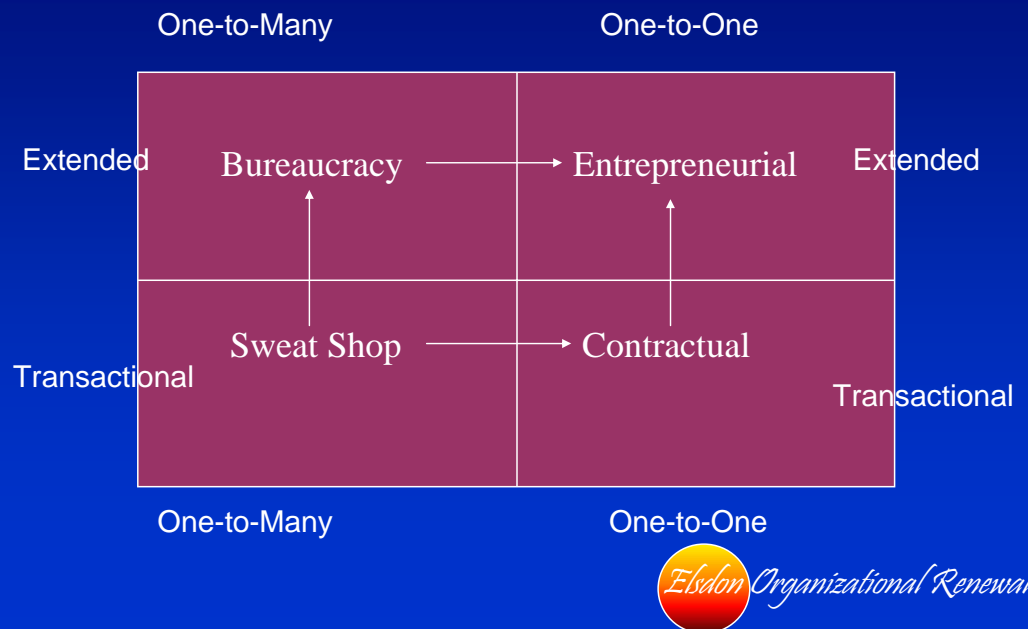
The preceding figure shows examples of five workforce segments for a human

resource consulting organization, with the size of each circle proportional to the number of people in each segment. The arrow shown on each circle is the direction the organization would like to move each segment. For example, for sales staff, strengthening an extended relationship while continuing to tailor the relationship to each person's needs. There are a number of operating practices that can be adjusted to meet the varying needs of each segment. Some are shown in the following table across the top, while the body of the table shows examples of operating practices in each of the five illustrative workforce segments:

Workforce Segment	Individual Development	Performance Management	Compensation	Decision Making
Corporate	Internal organization framework	Objectives driven	Base, small variable	Consensus
Permanent Delivery	External professional organization affiliations	Driven by client satisfaction criteria	Base, bonus linked to metrics	Centralized
Contract Delivery	Individual responsibility	Project based	Project based	Flexible within operating parameters
Sales	Internal organization framework	Quota driven	High variable component tied to quota	Individual autonomy
New Business	Learning through business experience	Driven by business penetration	Individual, bonus linked to business performance	Autonomous

We can also relate segmentation to overall characterization of an organization's approach to its workforce. This is illustrated in the following figure:

## Organization/Individual Relationships



The four quadrants represent four example forms of relationship between an organization and individuals. In the lower left corner is the transactional, one-to-many relationship. In a situation of limited alternatives for individuals this can lead to exploitation, as in a sweatshop. For example, migrant farm workers or textile workers engaged in piece work may unfortunately be located here. This implies an unequal distribution of power with the organization as the dominant party.

The upper left corner shows an extended relationship in which organizational policies are defined at the collective level. This is the traditional corporate approach. The lower right corner applies to a transactional relationship negotiated on a one-to-one basis. An example would be an agreement between an organization and an independent contractor.

In the upper right corner is the combination of an extended relationship developed on a one-to-one basis. This implies an equal division of power between the individual and the organization. Entrepreneurial relationships can reside here. The arrows on the chart represent a possible dynamic over time, showing movement from the lower left quadrant to either greater independence in the lower right or greater collectivism in the upper left, and then in both cases to the entrepreneurial situation in the upper right. Here we see the opportunity for the organization to create that attractive entrepreneurial environment for individuals.

So an important decision for those charged with organizational responsibility is where to operate with respect to the workforce segments. This decision needs to reflect the values and principles of the organization as well as business objectives. For example, the sweatshop model fails to meet fundamental ethical principles regardless of its business implications.

A critical strategic step for organizations is to map the workforce segments so that there is clarity about the nature of the relationship sought with each group. This can then be clearly communicated to individuals so people can select the environment and relationship principles that match their individual needs. The process for doing this will be specific to each organization, reflecting the culture and operating practices.

Those charged with organizational responsibility must also ensure that critical external factors and strategic issues are incorporated into this workforce decision making. This means addressing issues and questions such as the following:

- Values regarding relationships with employees and other stakeholders
  - What are the ethical principles the organization will adopt in establishing and maintaining its relationships?
- Rapidity of change: cyclical/stability and the need for flexibility
  - What does the pace of external change mean for the changing composition and capabilities of the workforce?
- Importance of cumulative learning
  - How significant is cumulative learning in driving organizational effectiveness? What does this mean for knowledge generation processes and the nature of workforce relationships?
- Availability of key skills
  - What are skill needs for the future and how will they be acquired?
- Opportunities for individual development
  - What are the opportunities for, and limitations of, development available for individuals? How will deficiencies be addressed?
- Leadership capabilities
  - What competencies are available, or need to be developed in individual leaders to execute workforce strategies and build organizational capabilities?

Addressing these fundamental questions coupled with building a working environment that values and supports individuals will go a long way to securing an organization with which people choose to affiliate and, in so doing, build organizational success.

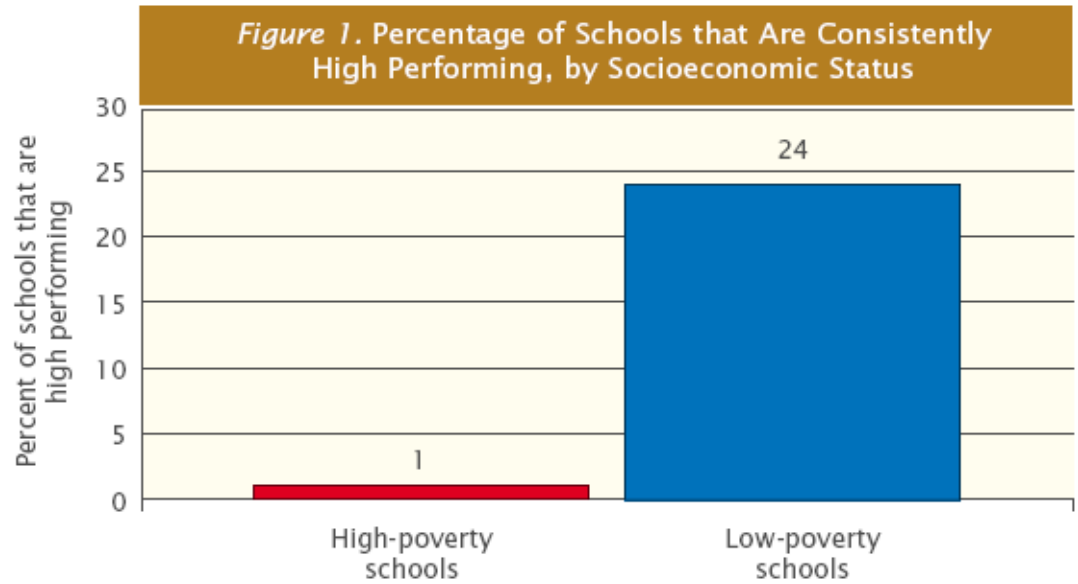
Portions of this article were derived from “Affiliation in the Workplace: Value Creation in the New Organization.” By Ron Elsdon. Westport: Praeger, 2003.

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## Social Change

We continue to be challenged in the U.S. to create a society that eliminates poverty and its shackles. In our May/June newsletter we saw how it is more difficult to break free of poverty in the U.S. than in other developed nations, such as Finland, Sweden and Canada. This affects all in our society, those who are poorest suffer from constrained life choices. All in our society suffer from the economic consequences of a large, disenfranchised population. What factors contribute to this situation? One key to emerging from poverty is the education needed to secure skills for prospering in today’s information and service based economy. This

demands broader and more varied skills than in prior, production dominated eras. The following figure demonstrates the chasm separating the performance of schools in high and low poverty areas, speaking to the challenge of securing an adequate education when financially disadvantaged.

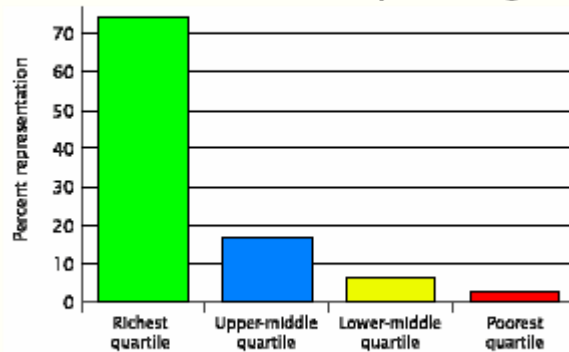


*Note:* High poverty is defined as at least 50 percent of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch; low poverty (middle class) is defined as fewer than 50 percent eligible. High performing is defined as being in the top third in the state in two subjects, in two grades, and over a two-year time period.

*Source:* Douglas Harris, "Beating the Odds or Losing the War? A National Portrait of Student Achievement in High-Poverty Schools," Economic Policy Institute, forthcoming.

Not surprisingly this continues into higher education. The following figure shows grossly unequal representation by those with most wealth at top colleges.

### Economic Backgrounds of Students at 146 Top Colleges



"America's Untapped Resource: Low-Income Students in Higher Education." Century Foundation Press, 2004.

Are our national fiscal policies aimed at redressing this balance? Unfortunately not in the area of taxation. The following figure shows the influence of the 2001- 2003

tax cuts disproportionately benefiting those who need it least, the wealthiest 1% of our population.

## Influence of 2001-03 Tax Cuts

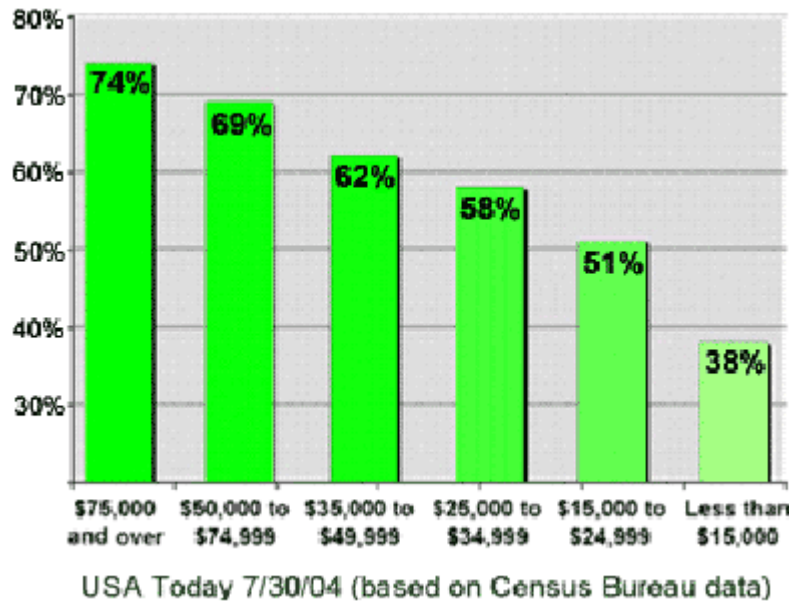
Income quintile	Taxes as shares of income before and after 2001-03 tax cuts			Average tax cut*	Percent of total after-tax income before and after 2001-03 tax cuts		
	Before	After	Change		Before	After	Change
Lowest	9.0%	8.5%	-0.5	\$-61	4.0%	3.9%	-0.1%
Second	13.9	12.5	-1.4	-327	7.8	7.7	-0.1
Middle	18.4	16.9	-1.5	-586	12.1	12.0	-0.1
Fourth	21.6	20.1	-1.5	-967	19.3	19.2	-0.1
Next 15%	24.6	23.2	-1.4	-1,538	24.3	24.1	-0.2
Next 4%	25.9	24.7	-1.2	-2,907	13.8	13.6	-0.1
Top 1%	27.9	22.9	-5.0	-66,601	18.8	19.6	0.8
All	23.0	20.8	-2.1	-1,386	100.0	100.0	—



Source: Economic Policy Institute from Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy



And when we look at voter turnout as shown in the following figure, not surprisingly we find those with the least financial resources, also least represented.



So our challenge and opportunity continues to be to seek representation for all in our society, particularly those who are poorest. From this representation we can seek equity in education, and from this we can build the opportunity for all to enjoy economic prosperity and full expression so that all may respond well to Jonathan Swift’s blessing “May you live all the days of your life.”

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## Quote

### Wild Geese

You do not have to be good.  
 You do not have to walk on your knees  
 for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.  
 You only have to let the soft animal of your body  
 love what it loves.  
 Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.  
 Meanwhile the world goes on.  
 Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain  
 are moving across the landscapes,  
 over the prairies and the deep trees,  
 the mountains and the rivers.  
 Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,  
 are heading home again.  
 Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,  
 the world offers itself to your imagination,  
 calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting--  
 over and over announcing your place  
 in the family of things.

Mary Oliver, from Dream Work

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## Upcoming Elsdon Organizational Renewal (EOR) Events and Recent Mentions

### Upcoming Events/Publications

- Webinar for Project Management Institute
  - September, 2006, “Becoming Career Fit in Turbulent Times.”
    - <http://pmi-issig.org/Default.aspx?tabid=319>
- Seminars for University of California Haas School of Business, Berkeley/Columbia MBA program
  - September 9, 2006, “Creating Value in Your Workforce: Affiliation is a Foundation.”
  - September 29, 2006, “Guiding Organizational Change.”
- Presentation for John F. Kennedy University, School of Management, Career Development Annual Institute
  - October 6, 2006, “Rising and Falling Tides.”
- Presentation for Northern California Section of the American Institute of Chemical Engineers

- October 17, 2006, “Becoming Career Fit.”
- Chapter titled “How Can You Grow Your Practice with Purpose?” for National Career Development Association Monograph
  - Likely publication date: late 2006

## 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.](#)
  - Greenwood Publishing Group
    - [Affiliation in the Workplace — 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&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](#)

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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

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- 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