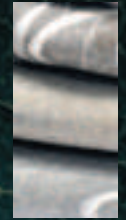


LēadTM

Issue 14

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Creating a Responsive Organizational Culture by Balancing a Multigenerational Workforce ■ Keeping Your Balance in an Ever-Shifting Marketplace ■ A Balanced Employment Strategy ■ Balancing Work & Family: The Legal Implications of the Sandwich Generation ■ Work-Life Balance – An Update from the Frontlines

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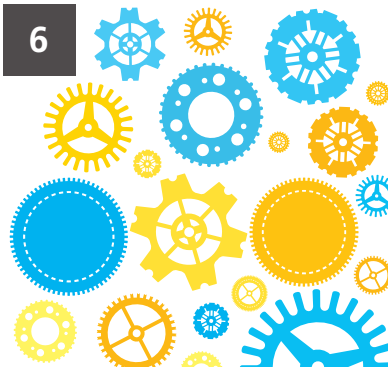
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Lead™

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“It wasn’t easy, but as a leadership team, we struck the right balance between our traditional, core offerings and our less prominent ones, which we strategically rethought to expand into what used to be more peripheral verticals for us.”



Sandra Hokansson
President and Country Manager
Adecco Employment Services Limited

IN 2009, DURING THE RECESSION, I realized that the industry specializations that had made us successful before the economic crisis would not sustain us post-recession. With our sizable business mix in call centre and manufacturing staffing, and with the appreciation of the Canadian dollar over 2007 and 2008, several of our long-standing clients moved out of Canada, consolidating operations elsewhere. There was no doubt that we had to change. With these issues, in addition to Canada’s new foreign exchange situation and new global economic realities, the primary concern going forward was learning how to balance our business mix to retain as much of our legacy business as we could, but also to expand our service offerings based on economic predictions and demographic realities.

By all indications, STEM careers (scientific, technology, engineering, and mathematics) were growing the fastest in Canada. To scale our operations in such a way that we would be in the best position during the economic recovery to build our future, we considered everything, including economic factors, demographics, our existing strategies and priorities, and our colleague talent base. It wasn’t easy, but as a leadership team, we struck the right balance between our traditional, core offerings and our less prominent ones, which we strategically rethought to expand into what used to be more peripheral verticals for us. And, after implementing these changes, we were more than pleased to see that we had met our goals just halfway through our plan.

Rebalancing our business mix allowed us to navigate a new world – and the journey continues. The market continues to change and we are once again faced with unique challenges presented by the increased commoditization of our services and a sluggish economy. Presently, Canada’s dollar is yet again adjusting with the World Price Index recently reporting its true value at 88 cents. What will this mean for our balance moving forward? Time will tell and we’ll have to be ready.

Recently, at Hyper Island in Sweden, I attended an executive leadership training program on digital innovations. It too focused on balance, and provided us with insights on how we can continue to leverage our bricks-and-mortar presence while developing a stronger online presence. We were also reminded that everything changes and that, while change is painful, as leaders, we have to ‘jump in’ and learn to adapt in a world that is evolving faster now more than ever.

While there are many economic and social trends that throw us off balance, there are also many solutions to explore, and in this issue of *Lēad*, we are very pleased to showcase how our contributors view the topic of balance and the solutions they offer to us. Please enjoy this edition of *Lēad*. ■

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Part of the founding team at Celestica, Eileen Brown has held various positions over the years within the organization, including VP of Global Business Solutions (IT), VP of Global SCM Processes and Applications (Supply Chain), Director of Mergers and Acquisitions, Director of Operations, and Director of Compensation, Pension and Benefits. Eileen is also a veteran of IBM, having provided thought leadership to clients on business strategies, supply chain management, HR, and enterprise resource planning as part of the company's global consulting organization.



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Sought after by industry leaders across North America, Giselle is a multigenerational workplace expert who draws on her decade's worth of research and experiences to help organizations better manage the diverse age groups that make up their workforces. Along with Adwoa Buahene, she is also a managing partner and co-founder of n-gen People Performance, Inc. and the co-author of two books: *How to Get, Keep & Grow All Four Generations* and *Upgrade Now: 9 Advanced Leadership Skills*. Nominated in 2010 for RBC's Canadian Women Entrepreneur Trailblazer award, Giselle is also on the Marketing & Communications Committee for Habitat for Humanity – Toronto.



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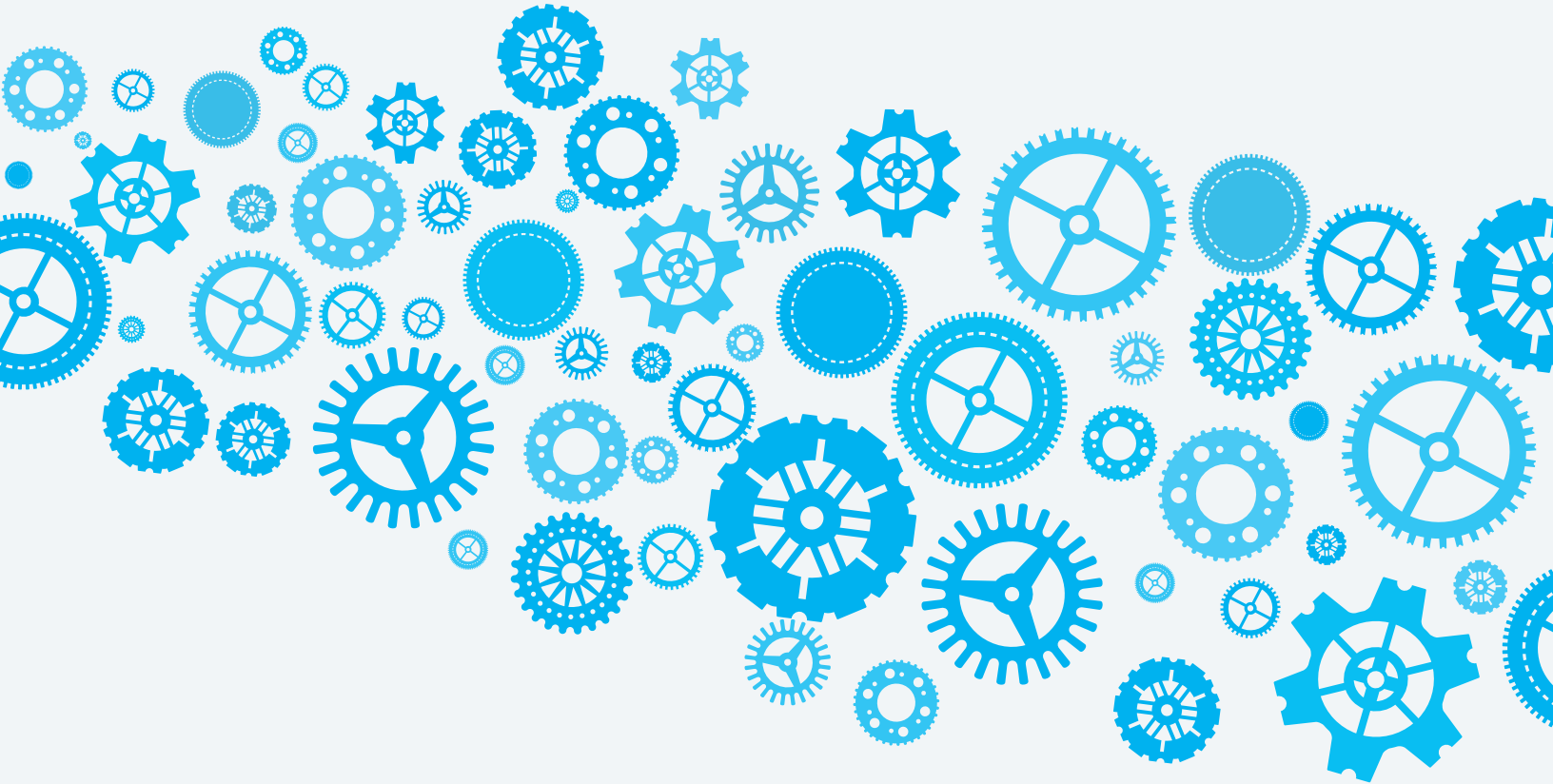
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Creating a Responsive Organizational Culture by Balancing a Multigenerational Workforce

By Adwoa K. Buahene and Giselle Kovary



TODAY, MORE SO THAN EVER, the implications of a multigenerational workplace are felt across recruitment, retention, and engagement practices. Getting the balance right in responding to and managing the expectations of Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Gen Xers and Gen Ys is essential to productivity and performance. Organizations struggle with integrating Gen Xers and Gen Ys, while trying not to alienate more experienced generations. This is particularly true because most organizational cultures are founded on Traditionalist and Baby Boomer values, behaviours, and expectations. Leaders must respect that people are part of the capital of their organizations, and as such, human capital risk needs to be managed like any other type of financial or operational risk. Organizations need to be strategic in viewing the modernizing of their organizational cultures as a change initiative. The goal is to maximize the skill sets of all four generations, while managing the differences.

Human capital risk management involves much more complex challenges than simply overcoming the obstacles of an aging workforce and small labour pool. A finer analysis reveals that an organization's inherent diversity impacts its ability to recruit, retain, and engage employees. A lot of work has been done to recognize and positively harness gender and ethnic diversity. However, another layer of analysis is required. In today's complex and dynamic market, understanding, embracing, and learning to

manage the risks associated with a multigenerational workforce is needed to gain a competitive advantage. In the last 10 years, organizations have moved from raising awareness of generational differences, to actively incorporating a multigenerational perspective into the planning and execution of human resources and operational strategies.

Traditionalists, Baby Boomers, Gen Xers, and Gen Ys are classified as four distinct cohorts based on demography and sociology. The life-defining, socio-economic, historical, and technological events – which the members of each cohort experienced – bind them together, resulting in similar values, behaviours, and expectations. Leaders often mistakenly believe that because one cohort expresses a particular value in a certain way, the other cohorts don't possess that same value. For example, since Traditionalists demonstrate long-term loyalty to an organization, Gen Xers and Gen Ys are often judged as disloyal when they are not willing to devote their entire career to one organization. Or, the fact that Baby Boomers are renowned for working long hours means that Gen Xers and Gen Ys must not possess a work ethic since they generally won't commit to the same number of hours consistently without a direct return on their time invested. To fully understand the generations, and how each cohort inherently adds risk to the workplace, organizations must deepen their understanding of how the four generations impact workplace performance.

	Life-Defining Events	Attitudes and Values	Goal
Traditionalists 1922–1945	Great Depression, WWII, Korean war, rise of labour unions	Loyalty, dedication, sacrifice, honour, compliance, hard-working	To build a legacy
Baby Boomers 1946–1964	Civil rights movement, Cold war, Quebec crisis, Trudeau era	Personal growth, youthfulness, equality, ambition, collaboration	To put their stamp on things
Generation X 1965–1980	Personal computers, AIDS, corporate downsizing, fall of Communism	Independence, pragmatism, results-driven, flexibility and adaptability	To maintain independence in all areas of their life
Generation Y 1981–2000	Digital age, reality TV, attacks of 9/11, corporate and government scandals	Confident, optimistic, civic-minded, innovative, diversity focused, techno-savvy	To find work and create a life that has meaning

Balancing and creating a responsive culture that maximizes the skill sets of all four generations, while managing their differences, cannot be achieved by changing HR policies or leadership practices ad hoc. Rather, it requires a strategic focus that is planned, executed, and treated as a change management initiative that is given the same importance of any other operational change. Change management demands that leaders incorporate the building blocks that are required for positive change (engage, communicate, manage, and support), and possess the ability to lead others successfully through change (undoing, learning, and locking-in new behaviours). The most successful way to create a responsive culture is to follow a change management process while implementing practices that engage a multigenerational workforce. Next, we highlight two key components to balancing a multigenerational workforce – creating an engaging workplace and performance management.

Creating an engaging workplace

The most engaging workplaces execute on the principles of:

- Flexibility
- Empowerment
- Recognition
- Emotional intelligence
- Trust
- Cross-functional collaboration
- Fun at work

Since your organization is comprised of varying percentages of each generation, or is mainly comprised of two or three generations, consider how you can incorporate a combination of these elements to create a unique environment that motivates, engages,

and propels your workforce forward. There is no one-size-fits-all combination; operational, industry, and regulatory factors will influence the creation of the right environment for your business. However, it is important to recognize that what it means to successfully execute on any one of those elements may be different across the generational cohorts. For example, what constitutes ‘fun at work’ will differ between the more experienced and younger generations. Traditionalists might not even believe that fun should happen at work, since ‘work’ is done during office hours and ‘play’ is done after office hours. Baby Boomers might define ‘fun’ as belonging to an industry networking association, while this wouldn’t appeal to Gen Xers since it still has a work focus. This cohort might see fun as having impromptu parties or being able to work in a casual, relaxed environment. Gen Ys would expect everything to be fun, from casual interactions with their leaders, to being able to work anywhere, anytime, to controlling the look of their workspace, to playing a game in the middle of their day, all while wearing casual clothes.

Performance management

While there is the science of performance management (e.g., the ratings, the process, the results), it is often the art of performance management with which leaders struggle the most. Within the performance management process, leaders are often instructed to hold performance management conversations with their team members. Those conversations need to include the recognition that different generations have different expectations of how their performance should be managed, and it needs to be recognized that each generation will respond differently to these types of conversations. From a generational perspective, each cohort’s

“...it is often the art of performance management with which leaders struggle the most.”



willingness to embrace performance management is based on its comfort level with receiving feedback. Most Traditionalists experienced a work environment where the only performance feedback given was either really good news ('you're getting promoted!'), or really bad news, ('you're getting fired!'). It can sometimes be difficult for Traditionalists to adapt to the current open approach, since they have been working for many years without any formal performance review process.

Since the widespread use of performance metrics has only occurred in the last decade or so, many Baby Boomers are receiving formal performance reviews mid-way or later in their careers. Historically, their performance was commented on by senior leaders in an informal way. Rewards were often largely based on the subjective perceptions of leaders (who you knew), versus the objective measurement of contribution to business outcomes (what you did). This approach often left strong performers, who didn't play the political game well, with little acknowledgement or recognition for their contributions. On the flip side, poor performers who were well connected within the organization were allowed to remain, or were even promoted. The performance management process was largely secretive. It didn't provide employees with a clear understanding of why their performance was above or below standard.

Gen X employees expect to receive feedback on their performance more frequently, on a quarterly or monthly basis. They don't want to spend a lot of time focusing on what they do well – they already know that. Instead, they want to understand how they can improve; they want to hear constructive feedback on their performance. They need to know how success will be meas-

ured and what resources and support will be provided to them. Gen Xers desire this type of feedback because they want to remain marketable. In order to do so, they know they need to continuously improve, learn, and grow.

Gen Ys are even more eager to receive feedback. They expect to know how they are performing on a monthly, weekly, and daily basis. However, although they have a large appetite for feedback, they are often ill-prepared to receive negative criticism. This cohort has always received positive, self-esteem-building praise by parents, teachers, and coaches. Receiving less than 100% (exceptional) on a performance rating may cause an emotional response in some Gen Ys. Managers should be trained to conduct performance discussions with Gen Ys that highlight developmental opportunities without plummeting motivation and engagement levels. Organizations need to be aware that Gen Ys openly share with their peers their performance ratings and the content of the discussions.

Conclusion

Creating a responsive culture that balances the needs of all four generations means that organizations must evaluate, tweak, and refine HR practices to align with what engages a multigenerational workforce. The more organizations are able to align and manage the expectations of each generational cohort, the more engaged their workforces will become. Creating a responsive culture allows organizations to mitigate the risks associated with multigenerational human capital. As your organization becomes more responsive, your culture will adapt to the changing demographics, resulting in a balance between the expectations of generational employee groups and operational targets. ■



Keeping Your Balance in an Ever-Shifting Marketplace

AN INTERVIEW
WITH EILEEN BROWN

As a multinational electronics manufacturing services (EMS) company, Celestica is on the cutting edge of technology in industries such as aerospace and defense, healthcare, alternative energy, industry, and many more. In such a constantly evolving market, it takes more than state-of-the-art machines to find balance.

AS VICE PRESIDENT OF GLOBAL HUMAN RESOURCES for Celestica, Eileen Brown is responsible for overseeing HR operations at every company site worldwide. Leading a global team of HR professionals whose day-to-day activities include employee relations, recruitment, performance, talent management, and a variety of HR programs from compensation to recognition to learning, Eileen understands that finding balance also means finding the right mix of talent that only good strategies and values can provide.

» **Businesses are constantly shifting their focus in order to respond to evolving demands within the market. What are some of the notable changes that your organization has gone through in the past five years to meet market demands? Have you made changes to lead the market in a new direction?**

Over the last several years, Celestica's strategy has focused on driving growth through higher-value customer opportunities and investing in new markets and with new customers.

As an example, to support new markets, including Semiconductor equipment, Aerospace and Defense, Healthcare, Green Technology, and Industrial, we expanded our complex and electro-mechanical capabilities through two strategic acquisitions. The acquisition of D&H Manufacturing gives us new capability for our customers in the area of precision machining, and the acquisition of Brooks Automation strengthened our capability to provide higher value-added services, specifically in the area of complex mechanical assembly.

We have also deepened partnerships with customers who want to leverage our expertise in joint design and manufacturing, engineering, supply chain collaboration, and after-market services.

» **What factors (internal and external) have influenced Celestica's growth and evolution?**

The permeation of electronics beyond traditional consumer products into global infrastructure, transportation, energy and utilities, healthcare, and nearly every aspect of our world, has driven the need for electronics to be integrated into highly complex mechanical applications, providing new market opportunities for Celestica.

Customers are also leveraging our experience and expertise in design, supply chain, and after-market services that we have honed

for the electronics industry. Celestica is applying these well-proven capabilities more broadly in our diversified markets to deliver value to new customers.

» **What types of skills are in demand now versus five years ago and do they vary by geographic market?**

Supporting diversified markets with products and service offerings has driven a need for additional skill sets related to more complex, lower-volume electro-mechanical products and applications. This need is consistent across geographies as these capabilities are required in all of our regions. The requirement for customer-facing and consultative skills is also increasing as the demand for our service offerings grow.

» **Given the variety of skills required now versus then, what does balance look like in your talent mix?**

Electronics skills continue to comprise the majority of our workforce, and we will always have a need for core electronics skills. At the same time, we are also seeing an increasing percentage of employees with complex, electro-mechanical capabilities, as well as design engineers and consulting professionals to support our growing services business.

» **How has your organization addressed the challenge of balancing your talent mix in order to emerge into new markets and areas of specialization?**

We continue to re-deploy skills to support new markets where feasible. We have added new capabilities both organically and through company acquisitions to satisfy both current and future customer requirements. We continue to rely on Adecco as a valued, long-term partner to play a key role in facilitating this shift in our skills profile on a global basis and to assist us in satisfying our immediate and growing need for certain specialized skills.

“The ability to engage the right skills at the right time is paramount in managing the short-term volatilities that are inherent in our operations, whether in transition or in a steady state.”

➤ **How has HR had to respond to and/or lead the organization to get the talent balance right and to strategically align themselves with the changes that have occurred?**

HR aligns to strategic business changes through our talent management process in order to understand the emerging capabilities required and to ensure the timely calibration of our talent. The creation of opportunities for individual development in support of skills re-alignment is an important part of our efforts to re-equip the workforce where required. We recruit the highly specialized skills that we cannot develop in-house.

➤ **We know that Celestica has expanded into Asia and other global markets in order to remain competitive. When expanding into new countries, how have you been able to maintain the core culture and values of your organization?**

As we expand, we replicate technologies, processes, and capabilities that have been optimized by experience to build a foundation for agile and flexible operations that will yield predictable and high-quality results.

Celestica's brand and values help to ensure that we maintain the core culture of our company as we expand into new countries. Using our values as a set of principles that guide how we operate as an organization, the local leadership team is able to build a highly engaged and performing team with high morale, all while respecting local cultures and customs. Celestica's brand attributes, which guide how we act and behave with each other and our customers, also help to maintain our culture at our sites around the globe.

Celestica's corporate social responsibility strategy is core to our company's culture, and all of our sites around the globe are engaged in giving back to their communities where the need is greatest. Our commitment to corporate social responsibility has

helped to develop a global team that works together with integrity and respect – enabling the success of our customers, the end customer, and our communities.

This approach creates reliable and consistent performance for our customers and helps to build our brand locally to attract and retain the best and brightest talent.

➤ **What advice would you give to a company that is currently in a state of evolution and is looking to balance their core legacy and competencies with new competencies being developed?**

Workforce flexibility is a critical element of both our transition and steady-state strategies. The ability to engage the right skills at the right time is paramount in managing the short-term volatilities that are inherent in our operations, whether in transition or in a steady state. Predictability is difficult to achieve in most industries given the constantly accelerating pace of our world, so learning to embrace and thrive on the volatility is imperative. We rely on partners like Adecco to help us achieve that result on a global basis. ■



A Balanced Employment Strategy

By Peter Andersen, PhD

IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE LAST RECESSION, employers are faced with a myriad of challenges from a new business landscape. Increasingly, there is a need today to find some kind of balance in what is a wider range of business uncertainty.

In the past, business forecasts have often been targets rather than true forecasts that incorporate an assessment of the probabilities of what could reasonably happen. The financial crisis and the economic shake-out of the last seven years have made employers more willing to think of a wider range of forecast outcomes.

They are also now more open and willing to think about challenging and bad news forecast outcomes that they previously did not want to consider or even hear about.

Today, employers face a list of forecast uncertainties that is longer than ever before. The management of a company's employment assets now needs to be balanced against an uncertain future involving such things as cyclical market demand, intense competition, foreign exchange volatility, uncertain inflation trends, regional wage cost developments, and transformative technological change.

“For an employer, the trick is to get the right balance between employment contract flexibility and an assured supply of the right kind of worker.”

The issues of outsourcing and insourcing are also bound to rear their heads. International outsourcing is no longer in vogue and this has direct human resources implications. There is a lot to think about – more than can be handled in an article short enough to keep readers’ attention.

Let’s start with the economy and market demand. This is a different kind of business cycle. Market demand is growing more slowly than past standards would indicate. It has been a slow recovery. However, will this continue indefinitely? Is there a possibility that conditions could return to normal and that a faster economic recovery could appear in 2014 and 2015? What are the probabilities of this happening? Opinions will vary, but the possibility lies within the range of reasonable outcomes.

This means employers need to balance this kind of uncertainty with an appropriate employment strategy. Flexible employment contracts seem to be the answer. However, there needs to be the option to lock in needed skills and expand the workforce rapidly if the improvement in market demand turns out to be stronger and longer lasting than expected.

This is where the competitive environment comes in. It is hard to make the argument that business is not more competitive today than ever before. It cuts across all dimensions – price, quality, design, service, and response/delivery speed. Globalization has shaped this environment, but so has the pressure of the recession and the low inflation environment in its aftermath.

Remember: it is your employees that allow you to compete on all of these levels. For an employer, the trick is to get the right balance between employment contract flexibility and an assured supply of the right kind of worker. The risk is that your competitors could move quickly if business conditions improve, lure your employment assets away, and scoop up a limited supply of additional workers. This risk can only be managed by keeping a close eye on business conditions and labour availability.

Foreign exchange rate volatility is an uncomfortable fact of life for employers, but it is something that cannot be ignored in managing risk. The Canadian dollar (CAD) has a habit of making large and unpredictable moves that can be either good or bad for your business. It is making such a move right now. There

has been a big sell-off in the CAD since the beginning of the year. A lower CAD is good news for the business outlook. It will have a direct effect on your staffing requirements. The timing, however, remains uncertain.

Big currency moves affect all employers, even those in the services sector who do not think that they are competing with anyone outside the country. Basically, we all have customers who are influenced by currency swings. They don’t have to be exporters because an overvalued CAD can open the door to competition from cheaper imports. The sharp decline in the CAD since the beginning of the year means that you don’t have to be as nervous in committing to a more aggressive hiring stance.

Inflation and wage cost developments are also difficult to predict and can affect your employment strategy. Recently, inflation and wages have been increasing at surprisingly low rates. However, history tells us that big swings are possible. If there is a big pick-up, how can we protect company profitability? Performance-based wage structures offer one solution. Another is to manage your workforce in such a way as to maximize productivity. Non-wage rewards also offer a range of possibilities.

Furthermore, market demand has more than one dimension. Canada needs to break out of the box and move beyond its traditional trading partners, the U.S., the U.K., and Europe. The emerging market economies (EMEs) are the fastest growing on the planet and we have not done a good job in developing business with them. The challenge for companies is to balance this opportunity with an employment strategy that could help develop business in these more exotic markets.

The application of technology-to-business use is accelerating, but it remains complex in its direction and usefulness. A balanced approach to this situation would be to change the age and experience mix of your workforce. Younger employees will be more in step with many new technologies and advancements, and your assignment of responsibilities should reflect this.

The bottom line points to flexibility and the search for options. The future will always be uncertain, but what counts is how one adapts to change. ■



Balancing Work & Family

THE LEGAL IMPLICATIONS
OF THE SANDWICH GENERATION

By Parisa Nikfarjam, BA, JD

RECENTLY, WE'VE SEEN AN INCREASE in employees who are feeling the squeeze between childcare and eldercare responsibilities. These situations stem from the rise of the "Sandwich Generation": a generation created as a result of the aging population and the postponement of having children. A recent national study¹ (the "Study") on balancing work and caregiving, suggests that work-life balance comes at a great cost to members of the Sandwich Generation and their employers.

The Study found that 63% of caregivers report stress, anxiety, and frustration, and "are getting worn down by the demands on their time and lack the resilience to emotionally separate the work-life domains."²

We are finding that more and more of our employer clients are also affected by the strain on the Sandwich Generation. In fact, the Canadian Mental Health Association estimates that employee burnout costs Canadian businesses an estimated \$12 billion every year in health claims, lost productivity, and absenteeism.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE SANDWICH GENERATION

In order to avoid or lessen the costs associated with the Sandwich Generation, we often advise clients to take a proactive approach when managing them, particularly with respect to the following issues:

Family Status Accommodation

Family status, defined as "the status of being in a parent and child relationship", is one of the prohibited grounds under the *Human Rights Code*³ ("Code"), and has over the past year received renewed attention after the release of two significant decisions.

The first was the landmark decision of *AG (Canada) v. Johnstone*,⁴ which involved the denied request of an employee for a fixed-shift schedule to accommodate her childcare needs. The Federal Court held that requests for childcare accommodations stem from genuine need and are not a result of lifestyle choices, requiring employers to canvass accommodation options.

While it did not receive the same fanfare as *Johnstone*, *Devaney v. ZRV Holdings Limited*⁵, a case from the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal, stands for the proposition that an employer has a similar legal obligation to accommodate an employee who has eldercare responsibilities.

The employee in *Devaney* was dismissed after 27 years of service as a result of the absences he incurred to take care of his disabled mother. The Tribunal found that the employee had been discriminated against due to the employer's strict attendance policy and the fact that the employer failed to engage in a dialogue with him about his caregiver needs.

We know from *Johnstone* and *Devaney* that caregiver responsibilities are recognized and protected under the *Code*. So when we work with our employer clients, we remind them to have a meaningful dialogue with the employee requesting accommodation so as to assess the scope of the employee's caregiver responsibilities and canvass the options that can best meet his or her needs. The court decisions also remind employees that accommodation is available provided they have a caregiver *need* as opposed to a *preference* or *choice* in caregiving options. Again, working with our employer clients, we will review the fact that employees should not expect the *ideal* response to their requests for accommodation, and that they should be aware that accommodation is a two-way street, requiring them to provide their employers with information that will assist in identifying reasonable accommodation.

Absenteeism and Discipline

With a Sandwich Generation employee, absences may be connected to family obligations, stress, or mental health issues. In fact, the Study estimates that 57% of caregiver employees surveyed reported high levels of stress and 36% reported high levels of depressed mood. As a result, we remind, if not assist, employer clients to first gauge whether certain behaviours, symptoms, and requests may be related to a disability, mental health condition, stress, family obligations, or some other legitimate, legally-recognized reason for accommodation before they take disciplinary action against an absent employee. By way of example, we advise our employer clients to obtain relevant medical documents and expert advice. We also advise and/or assist them in creating and maintaining an accommodation process.

However, we remind our clients that not every absence needs to be accommodated until the employee no longer requires the accommodation or resigns. If a disability or obligation is such that the operation of the business is hampered excessively, or if an employee remains unable to work for the reasonably foreseeable future even though the employer has tried to accommodate him or her, the employer will have satisfied the test for undue hardship and will no longer be required to accommodate the employee. However, this assessment and any consequent steps should be taken with caution, ideally with the assistance of legal counsel and after well-documented accommodation steps have been attempted.

Increased Workplace Conflict

With increased levels of stress and mental health issues plaguing the Sandwich Generation, employers will need to be aware of an increase in workplace conflict. Indeed, Canadian workplaces have identified a 66% increase in aggressive acts within their workplaces over the past five years.⁶ The number of times we are asked to either conduct a workplace investigation into, or otherwise advise on, a workplace conflict seems to reveal the prevalence of these issues as well as their costs for an organization, particularly when these issues are not addressed at an early stage.

Despite legislative and judicial efforts to curb harassment and violence, workplace conflict is still rampant, even if it has not



“...employers keen on attracting, retaining, and engaging employees will need to adjust their strategies by understanding and accommodating the various dimensions of the Sandwich Generation.”

escalated to the level of workplace harassment or violence.⁷ A recent *Harvard Business Review* article, “The Price of Incivility”⁸, reported that over the past 14 years, 98% of workers experienced uncivil behaviour. Aside from overt retaliations, employees who experience workplace incivility are less creative and less likely to stay. Half of these employees also deliberately decrease their effort or lower the quality of their work.⁹

Given the costs associated with workplace incivility and the increased legal attention on workplace harassment and violence, ensuring that the stress of the Sandwich Generation does not spill over into the workplace is crucial. For this reason, we often provide training to our employer clients on how to identify the signs of workplace conflict, and take preventative measures by conducting internal training on these issues or conducting prompt workplace investigations when conflicts arise.

STRATEGIES TO MANAGE THE SANDWICH GENERATION

Despite the legal challenges, employers keen on attracting, retaining, and engaging employees will need to adjust their strategies by understanding and accommodating the various dimensions of the Sandwich Generation. Here are a few suggestions which we have found to be of particular assistance when addressing these challenges:

- Consider whether accommodation is required to address caregiver *needs*;

- Canvass accommodation options, including modified work hours and telework arrangements;
- Implement an attendance management policy that takes into consideration absenteeism based on legitimate human rights grounds;
- Ensure that all managers are trained to understand the duty to accommodate and how this may present itself in the workplace in connection with mental health issues;
- Request medical documentation for disability or stress-related leaves of absence;
- Obtain expert opinion or advice where needed; and
- Through regular training on the workplace harassment and violence policy, and by requesting that each employee re-commit to the principles of the policy on a regular basis, remind employees that harassment and violence are not tolerated in the workplace.

When we begin working with an employer client to manage difficult issues like those identified above, they are often surprised to learn about the legal avenues open to them. With careful planning and advice, employers can manage these issues as they present themselves in the workplace and minimize legal liability. ■

1 Linda Druxbury and Christopher Higgins “Revising Work-Life Issues in Canada: The 2012 National Study on Balancing Work and Caregiving in Canada” (2012). The Study focuses on highly-educated managers and professionals, particularly those at larger firms, and is based on a national survey of work-life balance of 25,021 employees. It was conducted in 2011 and 2012. Of those, almost 8,000 responded to questions about caregiving, of which researchers conducted 111 follow-up phone interviews [the “Study”].

2 *Ibid.*

3 R.S.O. 1990, c H.19.

4 2013 FC 113.

5 2012 HRTO 1590.

6 (2000) Canadian Initiative on Workplace Violence.

7 On June 15, 2010, and in response to heavily-publicized incidents of workplace violence, Bill 168 came into force in Ontario, which amended the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* by requiring employers in Ontario to put in place policies and programs dealing with workplace violence and harassment. In the period between June 15, 2010 and March 31, 2011, Ministry of Labour (MOL) Inspectors investigated more than 400 complaints involving workplace violence and more than 1000 complaints involving workplace harassment. In addition, 600 orders associated with workplace violence and 1100 orders associated with workplace harassment have been issued.

8 Christine Porath and Christine Pearson, “The Price of Incivility”, (January–February 2013) <http://hbr.org/2013/01/the-price-of-incivility/>.

9 *Ibid.*

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WORK-LIFE BALANCE AN UPDATE FROM THE FRONTLINES



By Marilynne Madigan

THE CANADIAN MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION (CMHA) estimates that employee burnout accounts for \$12 billion in health claims every year. This staggering statistic warrants revisiting a topic that for several years now has been at the forefront of the employment world: the work-life balance – or rather, *imbalance* – of employees.

Digging a bit deeper, the cost to employers of lost time caused by mental health issues is about \$1,500 per person, per year. In fact, every year, Canada's private sector spends about \$180 billion in short-term disability payouts, and \$135 billion for long-term disability. Absenteeism, which is simply not coming to work, and presenteeism, which is coming to work while sick, costs Canadian employers about \$6.3 billion every year.

The causes of work-life imbalance

So what are the causes of all this mental unrest in the workplace? The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (CCOHS) identifies four broad reasons: role overload, which is where an employee is asked to take on an unreasonable amount of work;

work-to-family interference, which happens when one's role at work encroaches too much on their personal life; family-to-work interference, which happens when one's family troubles, be it a sick relative, domestic conflict, or something else, makes it hard for them to fulfill their work commitments; and caregiver strain, which occurs when one is responsible for taking care of a relative in need, be it a child, a spouse, or an elderly parent.

Of these categories, caregiver strain is often cited as a major source of work-life imbalance these days because many of those in their prime working years are charged with taking care both of their young children (whom they had at an older age) and their aging parents, dubbing them the "Sandwich Generation". However, all four categories identified by CCOHS remain equally relevant. Simply put, the current resourcing level realities indicate that we are all being asked to do more with less, both personally and professionally.

It's not just employees at the tipping point

The question that needs to be asked, especially when you consider the statistics above, is whether employers have really

“Absenteeism, which is simply not coming to work, and presenteeism, which is coming to work while sick, costs Canadian employers about \$6.3 billion every year.”

tried to accommodate their employees' needs. The answer is that there are indeed many employers who 'get it'; they embrace employee- and family-assistance programs and they ensure that such services aid in the holistic wellness of their workers *and* their workers' family members.

Employers who remain closed to such assistance programs, or who only pay lip service to them, do so at their own peril. They will inevitably feel the strain on their bottom lines while those who acknowledge and act to lighten the load of Canadian employees will see more productivity, higher talent attraction and retention, and an overall more engaged, motivated, and devoted workforce.

The role of management is to be role models

Any organization that chooses to implement employee assistance programs mustn't forget the importance of having visibly engaged managers. Creating a culture that accepts work-life balance needs to start at the top with senior leaders modeling the right behaviours. Only from there can employers start to create what's called a "psychologically safe" workplace. In fact, statistics show that by training leaders to make the workplace more psychologically safe, employers can reduce costs associated with mental health issues by 15% to 30%.

Of course, once management has been trained and the programs have been implemented, it's imperative that employers ensure their actions actually have an effect by measuring whether their employees are experiencing better work-life balance and improved mental health. How? It's simple: just ask them. Sending out regular surveys is the perfect way to take the pulse of any workforce. Over the long term, productivity measures should be established and it should come as no surprise when those measures reflect the employees' collective opinion on work-life balance.

What to implement and how to measure it

So what are the employers who 'get it' doing to improve their employees' work-life balance? Among the most popular approaches are flexible work hours, remote working arrangements (including job sharing) and opportunities for workplace health activities. Particularly, advances in telecommunications have made many of these options more and more viable. And while some argue that those advances have actually made it easier for work to intrude on people's personal lives, there are disciplined steps employees can take to prevent that from happening, such as creating a separate workspace at home. With that said, it is also the employer's responsibility to actively support such arrangements via a formal work plan program and by investing in innovative virtual solutions that allow for group work and regular team contact despite physical distances.

A harmonious future ahead

Throughout my career as an HR professional, I have witnessed friends, family, colleagues, and clients juggling work, school, family responsibilities, and a personal life. However, only in recent years have I seen employers accept the fact that changes must be made to support employees experiencing those same struggles. Employers are understanding more and more how work-life imbalance is impacting their businesses. As a result, they are creating cultures that are more supportive not just of balance, but of *harmony*. And while every individual's idea of harmony is different, there is a generational trend to keep in mind. More so than the Baby Boomers did, Generation X and Generation Y covet work-life harmony and are not likely to work for (or at least stay with) organizations that do not value and embrace that philosophy. That's why it pays (figuratively and literally) for employers to remember that employment is a two-way street. ■



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