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Thinking Strategically About Your Human Resources

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Title: Thinking Strategically About Your Human Resources
Publication Date: July 2018 to June 2023

From 2018 to 2023, *Thinking Strategically About Your Human Resources*, provided small and medium businesses of Black Brick Capital with relevant information on how to navigate common workplace matters. The themes throughout the years dealt with leadership, employee engagement, performance management, equity, and inclusivity, retaining talent, total rewards, psychological safety, employment legislation and much more.

Thinking Strategically About Your Human Resources serves as a resource that provides its readers with the ability to understand in clear and straightforward language, the considerations that employers were addressing prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, during this challenging time and its current impact on the work environment and employees.

Author Bio:

Marcella is a Human Resources Leadership Consultant with over 15 years of experience providing strategic and operational advice to her clients. She has collaborated with entrepreneurs, family-owned businesses, and leaders in the public, private and non-profit sectors. She is an advocate for diversity, equity and inclusion and is committed to fostering environments where individuals feel safe, welcomed, and encouraged to contribute their best.

Her expertise includes the ability to address complex workplace dynamics through effective listening, insightful questioning, and the application of employment legislation. She collaborates with her clients to learn about their specific challenges and opportunities and shares her knowledge in all areas of human resources including, employee engagement, performance management, workplace accommodations, talent acquisition, union/labour relations, employee rights, health and safety and workplace investigations. In addition, Marcella is a professor at Sheridan College's Pilon School of Business where she teaches human resources and business administration courses.

As a Human Resources Professional Association (HRPA) member, she is a Certified Human Resources Leader (CHRL) and a Certificate in Human Resources Management. Her other credentials include a Bachelor of Arts Honours degree, training in workplace investigations, organizational dynamics, management development, psychological health safety and organizational design.

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 - a. Focussing on [how to create a total rewards model](#), that attracts job seekers, retains, and engages your current employees to perform to expectations and bring about desired business results.
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Do you remember the dreams you had when you first started your own business? A business that benefitted others and produced high quality products or services. A business that thrived in good times, and weathered the storm of difficult economic times.

In this series “***Thinking Strategically about Your Human Resources***,” you will receive a series of articles to help you understand and implement good human resource practices for today and the future.

In the first article of the series, we focus on the **human resources policy manual**, an important component in the success of any business. A human resources policy manual is essential to the success and viability of your business. It sets the foundation for instilling and communicating your standards and values to employees, customers and other stakeholders. Your human resources practices and policies can be your way of aligning what is important to you with your business activities.

A well-written, concise human resources manual:

- **Communicates to employees your expectations for their conduct in the workplace**
- **Documents the conditions of employment (hours of work, pay, vacation, leaves, holidays, benefits etc.)**
- **Identifies your adherence to employment legislation and health and safety**
- **Helps protect you against the risk and liability of not having clear policies and procedures, which can lead to inconsistent practices among employees**
- **Demonstrates to your employees your commitment to fairness and a respectful workplace by having a policy manual that all employees must abide by**
- **Identifies the consequences of unacceptable behaviours that can lead to dismissal**

Many small and medium-sized business owners are often unprepared for the opportunities and challenges that arise from having to manage employees. A human resource policy manual provides you with an excellent way to communicate your values, clarify your expectations of employees and address legal requirements. If you do not have one in place, why wait?

April 2018 –

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Mining for Gold – Hiring for your team

Mining for gold is a complicated, time consuming, expensive endeavour that requires commitment, knowledge and the right tools.

Often, due to the need to hire quickly, businesses throw caution to the wind and hire based on who is available to get the work done. This may be a quick way to fill a staffing vacancy but does not recognize the importance of hiring from a strategic perspective. In this second edition of “**Thinking Strategically about Your Human Resources**,” we focus on five (5) key factors to consider when hiring.

1. **Understand the Law** ~ When mining for gold, it is important to understand the laws and rules which govern this activity. Similarly, hiring requires an awareness of the employment legislation, Acts and Codes that intersect with your hiring process. It is essential that you interact with all applicants in a respectful manner through all stages of the hiring process. The *Ontario Human Rights Code* requires that applicants are not to be discriminated against based on any of the protected grounds. The recent legislative changes in the *Employment Standards Act of Ontario, 2000*, also identify the factors that govern the employment relationship once you have hired.
2. **Know the difference between gold and pyrite** ~ Pyrite looks like gold at first glance. By knowing the composition of gold, you are able to distinguish it from the yellow, brass-like substance that can fool others without a discerning eye. As your business grows, it will require individuals with a variety of expertise in order to be successful. With a high degree of skill, consider also the character traits you wanted to be demonstrated in your workplace. Do not fall into the trap of hiring merely based on technical factors alone. Take the time to determine if your candidate is the real thing; he or she can do the work, will treat your customers well, is ethical and will relate well with you and other members of the team.
3. **Use the appropriate tools** ~ Mining involves the use of specialized instruments to first determine where one should invest the time and effort to search for the precious mineral. In the hiring process, you also need to have the right tools to assess your potential candidates. It is recommended that you:
 - a. Develop a job description that outlines the duties, responsibilities, qualifications, and character traits for the position you are hiring.
 - b. Require potential applicants to provide you with a resume, which identifies their skills, knowledge, experiences, education, and abilities to perform successfully for the job which you are hiring.
 - c. Take the time to review the resumes of applicants carefully. A resume provides insight into a candidate's skills, knowledge, employment history, volunteer experiences, and previous job/career choices.
 - d. Create an assessment mechanism to enable you to determine the candidates' abilities, transferrable skills, and other relevant criteria against your job requirements and work culture. An assessment of your candidates can include interview questions and a technical exercise to demonstrate performance in the role. Reference checking the information provided by candidates on their resume and during your interview assessment is also a worthwhile endeavour.

4. **Widen the surface area of your search** ~ While it is easy to rely solely on previous methods of hiring (family members and the sons and daughters of friends) consider, individuals changing careers, returning to the workforce after time spent caring for children or relatives, or individuals with disabilities. Hiring the right candidate can be challenging, by opening your pool of potential applicants to untapped sources of labour, you can gain a competitive advantage.
5. **Invest the time** ~ Those who seek to reap a profit in mining are required to invest not just the money but also the time in looking for deposits. The hiring process also has the same requirements. If you do not spend the time accurately determining your hiring needs, fail to scrutinize your applicants or do not ensure that your hiring process is fair, you leave your business vulnerable. Hiring the wrong individuals can lead to the loss of customers, unrest among team members and potential liabilities for unfair treatment of applicants.

Value your business enough to recognize that purposeful hiring is worth the effort and can lead your business to a gold mine of employees who can contribute to its success.

To obtain advice on hiring or other human resources related issues please contact Marcella Kowalchuk Consulting Incorporated at mpkowalchuk@gmail.com or (519) 941-8344

July 2018

When the Employment Relationship Comes to an end.

Imagine three people sitting in an office. One of them is not sure why the meeting has been called. The other two, who are the owners of the company, and are feeling anxious, are about to execute a very difficult decision.

Prior to executing the decision however, these owners explored the reasons for poor performance. There was an exploration into whether the employee's failure to meet expectations was related to a disability and a workplace accommodation was required. When this proved not to be the case, time was spent performance managing the employee through, coaching, providing additional training, communicating and documenting their concerns to the employee. After these efforts were exhausted, the time came to end the employment relationship.

In this edition of our newsletter "***Thinking Strategically about Human Resources***," we focus on terminations. Terminations are one of the most challenging tasks that owners/managers must perform. Due to the level of discomfort in communicating difficult information, many managers delay or avoid having this conversation. While informing an employee of your decision to terminate his or her employment does not get easier with time, keep in mind, that as challenging as the conversation is for you, it will have a significant impact on your employee. You can ensure that you handle the termination in a considerate, professional manner, in compliance with employment legislation by following these practices.

Good Business Practices When Terminating the Employment Relationship

- Be certain that your decision to terminate employment is not based on any of the protected grounds (Age, Ancestry, colour, race, Citizenship, Ethnic origin, Place of origin, Creed, Disability, Family status, Marital status, Gender identity, gender expression, Record of offences, Sex, Sexual orientation) under the **Ontario Human Rights Code**.
- Consult your legal counsel where possible or a designated human resources professional.
- Ensure that the termination letter contains information pertaining to the employee's entitlement to notice and severance in accordance with the *Employment Standards Act of Ontario, 2000 (ESA)*, benefits coverage and any other provisions under the terms of the employment contract.
- Hold the termination meeting with the employee and another member of your management team in a private meeting space.
- Keep the termination meeting professional, respectful, and brief. (Stick to the script)
- Provide a copy of the termination letter to the employee.
- If a settlement offer, in excess of the ESA minimums is made, provide the former employee with a reasonable amount of time to consider the offer and seek legal and or financial advice prior to acceptance.
- Offer your former employee time to gather his or her thoughts after hearing the news that the employment relationship has terminated.

- Remain calm and respectful during the meeting, your former employee may get emotional
- If required, offer the former employee a taxi drive at the company's expense if the he or she is not able to drive.
- Provide a means for the former employee to obtain any personal items left in the workplace (couriered to place of residence or pick up after hours)

For more information on how to transition employees from group to individual benefits at the end of the employment relationship, contact Mike Stapleton at Black Brick Capital Inc (416) 428-7728 or by email at Mike.Stapleton@freedom55financial.com .

For guidance on terminations or other human resource matters, contact Marcella at Marcella Kowalchuk Consulting Inc at mpkowalchuk@gmail.com or (519) 941-8344.

Already we are in the middle of January and most likely back into our regular habits of day to day running our business operations. Is this year going to be like the last? What have you done to make it a different year, a better year? Have you taken the time to reflect upon a strategy to improve your relations with clients, employees, suppliers and others in your industry? What new connections are you hoping to make?

As a leader, you already know the importance of having a mission statement, creating a vision and executing upon your mission. By being clear on your expectations, setting goals, monitoring your progress, evaluating what you have achieved against your goals, you are on your way to a better year than the one before. In our first edition of ***Thinking Strategically About Human Resources*** for 2019, we encourage you to move towards achieving big specific goals and achieving great results.

To get started here are a few things to be mindful of as you progress through 2019.

- Review your Human Resources policies to ensure compliance with the [Employment Standards Act of Ontario](#), [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#) and [Ontario Human Rights Code](#).
- Meet with others who lead with you to clearly articulate your goals for the year. Break these goals into smaller pieces to be achieved over quarterly or monthly time period.
- Meet with all your employees to communicate your goals for the year and have them work with their supervisor to discuss how these goals can be achieved through their day to day work.
- Connect with your suppliers and other partners to learn how you can strengthen your relationships
- Look at your “books” if you have not done so already.
- Pay close attention to the patterns, and evidence that provide you with insight of what went well last year, what did not and what you can learn from the positive and negative.
- Ask questions of your employees, clients, suppliers and partners. Ask so that you can learn and develop and improve
- Document your plan of action and follow through

Most importantly, remember that you do not have to go about achieving your mission alone. Many leaders make the mistake of thinking that success relies solely on their own efforts. Time and time again this way of thinking and acting leads to failure. Seek out assistance and guidance from other leaders, tap into the expertise of others and open yourself to new and creative ways of doing business.

And always remember, for human resources advice and support we can help. Contact Marcella at mpkowalchuk@gmail.com. **Marcella Kowalchuk Consulting Inc. Expert Human Resources advice to help you continue to do great things in your business.**

Employee Engagement

In generations past, the employment relationship was based on a strict exchange; people laboured for their employer and received wages in return and not much else.

In current times, most sensible Employers know that the employment relationship is much more than an exchange of compensation for hours worked on the job. Employers recognize that one of the critical paths to business success is to engage employees through recognition, an excellent working environment and consideration for their overall well-being. In the world of business today, there is the proliferation of employer's who offer, flexible work-arrangements, a business casual dress code, well designed open workspaces and cafeterias stocked with healthy snacks.

However, what if you cannot afford to have sleep pods or colourful playground-like slides to get to different levels in your office building? How can you demonstrate, beyond fair pay that you care about your employees and that you want to keep them engaged?

In this edition of “***Thinking Strategically about Human Resources,***” we provide a few suggestions to help you create and foster an engaged workforce. Beyond offering excellent health, medical and life insurance plan (which is a good place to start) the following can also help you with employee engagement.

1. Begin with the mindset that recognizes that your employees want the same thing you do, a better future for themselves and their family. From this perspective, you can develop a relationship with your employees that ensure you treat them in a manner that is fair, considerate and respectful.
2. Provide a work environment that is healthy and safe. This includes the physical workspace, the tools and equipment your employees use to do their work and the culture which needs to be psychologically safe and free from harassment, bullying, discrimination or violence.
3. Consider cost-effective educational initiatives to promote skill-mastery, career growth and promotional opportunities. Such actions can include job-shadowing, mentoring, job-rotation and tuition assistance for online courses.
4. Employees also appreciate informal and formal recognition efforts. We all want to feel valued and acknowledged for our contributions. An email of thanks, outlining the specific actions taken by staff to support a client or pausing to celebrate when the team reaches a goal or gets through a tough week is worth taking the time.
5. Our final suggestion is to reach out and provide a nice gesture for your employees' family members. Who would not appreciate an activity which can

Employee Engagement

directly impact one's family? Why not consider a movie night for the children of your employees in the lunchroom, a session on how to plan for your child's [educational future](#) or a potluck/barbecue in the summer?

These few suggestions are simple and inexpensive ways to engage your employees and let them know that you value each of them for more than their labour and recognize their contributions to your organization.

As always please contact Marcella at mpkowalchuk@gmail.com with your human resource questions, concerns or training needs.

Do you know what it is like to be away from your colleagues and the work that you enjoy?

For many employees, the work they perform provides them with a sense of value and esteem. When employees are away from work, whether short-term or long term due to an illness or injury, it can affect their mental health and well-being. Some employees even begin to question whether they are considered a valued employee. In this edition of ***Thinking Strategically about your Human Resources***, we focus on "Connecting with Employees who are off work."

It's very natural for us to care for those that we work with and for them to care for us in return. When one of your employees is away, there is an expectation that as their manager, you are going to check on them. Even the most private individual may appreciate a gesture of kindness through a card, call or text message letting them know that they are missed and their work-family wishes them good health.

"What do I say?"

It can be challenging to know what to say to an employee who is away from work due to an illness or injury. As employers, you are not privy to the employee's diagnosis. Not knowing may lead you to feel anxious about saying the wrong thing. Keep in mind that part of leadership involves, connecting with your employees even though it may be uncomfortable.

It is recommended that once you are advised that your employee will be away from work; ask if he or she is open to communication from you and or the team and the preferred method. Your contact can be simply stated as "We are thinking of you," "Looking forward to having you back" or "We miss you and hope you get well soon."

If your employee does not want to be contacted while off, honour his or her wishes and do not take it personally. However, remember that your employee is required to keep you updated on his/her status and ability to return to work.

As a leader, you can also ensure that your Benefits provider makes the process for applying and receiving benefits and information about your company's plan as hassle-free and straightforward as possible. When an employee or one of their family members requires information about their benefits coverage, (medical/dental, hospital coverage, life insurance or death benefits), they want timely access to this information.

Remember to ask your employees about their experience with the Benefits provider at least once a year and remind them to review their benefits information on file. Also, you can connect with your provider at renewal time to discuss usage and coverage levels to

ensure that the current plan is still meeting the needs of your employees or do some changes need to be made.

As a leader, recognize that your workplace is a source of connection for your employees and the team viewed as a "second family." Take the time to ensure that your employees are receiving the quality and value from your benefits and insurance provider and like all families; you are there when they need you.

For questions related to your benefits plan and to learn more about services available, please contact. Mike at Mike.Stapleton@freedom55financial.com or (416) 428-7728.

To obtain advice on human resources matters please contact Marcella Kowalchuk Consulting Incorporated at mpkowalchuk@gmail.com or (519) 941-8344

As this year winds down, I encourage you to take some time to reflect upon what you did right and what you may do differently. This may be asking a lot from you as all around us there is busyness, distractions and competing priorities vying for your attention.

In this edition of ***Thinking Strategically about Human Resources***, we focus on the necessity of learning in your role as a leader. *"But, where does one begin?"*

I recommend the following resources for you to consider. The first is a book entitled **Learning Leadership, The 5 Fundamentals of Becoming an Exemplary Leader**, by James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner.

This book has insightful guidance for seasoned leaders and those aspiring to leadership roles. While you need to read the book to absorb all of the wonderful lessons, below are a few excerpts taken from the text.

"To become a better leader than you are right now, the first fundamental thing you have to do is to *believe you can* be a better leader and that you can learn to improve your leadership skills and abilities."

"Choose wisely. What you stand for and believe in today will influence not just who you are today, but also how well you do tomorrow."

"Leadership is about the actions you take, not the position you hold. It's about the values that guide your decisions and actions. It's about the visions you have for yourself and others."

And my favourite excerpt....***"It is essential that you don't let people tell you that you can't lead---or if they do, that you don't believe them."***

The other resource comes from Harvard Business Review's *Ideacast* (podcast) based on the work of Whitney Johnson, Executive Coach, and author of **Build an A-Team: Play to their Strengths and lead them up the Learning curve**.

The findings from her research remind those new to their [leadership] roles that it can take up to six months and some times a year to begin to feel less confused, and not feel like you made a mistake taking on this role. She reminds listeners and readers that learning is a process. With more time in the position, practice and deliberate effort, your performance will improve.

There are many more excellent sources to aid you in becoming a better leader, which I will share in upcoming editions of the newsletter. For now, remember to take the time to reflect upon your leadership journey this year and focus on your vision for 2020.

Happy Holidays!

References:

- James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *Learning Leadership, The 5 Fundamentals of Becoming an Exemplary Leader*, (San Francisco: Wiley 2016)
- Whitney Johnson, *Build an A-Team: Play to their Strengths and lead them up the Learning curve*, May 1, 2018, <https://hbr.org/ideacast/2018/05/use-learning-to-engage-your-team.html>

Please contact Marcella at Marcella Kowalchuk Consulting Inc at mpkowalchuk@gmail.com if you want assistance addressing your leadership challenges and human resource questions.

Thinking Strategically About Your Human Resources – March 2020

“Ladies and Gentlemen serving Ladies and Gentlemen.” This quote expresses Horst Shulze, co-founder and former CEO of Ritz-Carlton and founder of Capella Group, feelings about employees and the clients they serve. In this seven-word statement, one gets a clear sense of the goal of the organization and the behaviours that will help achieve its goals.

In this edition of “Thinking Strategically about Your Human Resources,” we highlight the key lessons from Horst Shulze’s book ***“Excellence Wins, A No-Nonsense Guide to Becoming the Best in a World of Compromise”***, that identifies the strategies he used to build the Ritz-Carlton into the very best in customer service.

As a leader, owner, or employee, excellence in the way you work is an absolute necessity for long term success, influence and sustainability. To achieve anything worthwhile, it requires us to bring the best version of ourselves every day to serve our customers.

How is this done? As Shulze identifies in his book;

1. Leaders need to be clear on the vision of the organization and the goal to be achieved; providing extra care to customers to create value.
2. Leaders need to create a culture where;
 - They are looking to improve,
 - They do not settle for less
 - They let nothing cloud their vision
 - They strive to inspire.
3. Leaders need to measure performance to meet the goal of caring for our customers. Key measurements examine
 - **Customer satisfaction and loyalty.** Will your customers recommend you to their friends?
 - **Employee satisfaction.** What do they think about the organization? This is helpful to keep the organization healthy and avoid losing your talent and knowledge.
 - **Leading indicators.** What is the landscape going to be like in six months, a year with the economy, your competitors etc?
4. Leaders need to take the time to update employees by reminding them of the mission, the vision, the purpose and the value that is being created. Speak to your employees about *“what is in it for them.”*
5. Leaders need to do what the customers love with excellence through individualization and personalization. From this type of relationship, the money will follow.

In summary, Shulze's *"Excellence Wins"* provides the blueprint for leaders to create a culture of excellence through service delivery, measuring performance and employee engagement.

It would be my pleasure to hear from you on what actions you can take to improve your organization's culture to deliver on your mission, vision and goals. I can be reached at mpkowalchuk@gmail.com or by phone at 416-898-7387. I look forward to hearing from you.

Reference: Horst Shulze, ***Excellence Wins, A no-nonsense guide to becoming the best in a world of compromise***. Zondervan, Michigan, 2019.

Considerations for Employers during the Coronavirus Pandemic

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) has fundamentally changed the way we are interacting in our personal lives and in the workplace. While the risk of infection remains low. It is important for each of us to take the direction provided by legitimate sources seriously to reduce the spread of the virus, keep our community safe and reduce the impact on our health care system.

As an Employer, there are many steps you can take to assist in this endeavour and supports are being made available to you and your employees through government initiatives. Here are some protocols to consider:

- Allow your employees to work from home – this may not have been a consideration for doing business in the past, however many tasks can be performed at home with the appropriate technology
 - Employees who are deemed essential and who must come to a work site are to be practicing physical distancing and the appropriate hygiene as recommended by Public Health authorities.
 - Employees who are not able to work from home because they are ill or caring for an ill family member remain eligible to request a leave of absence under the Employment Standards Act job-protected leaves. (see list below)
 - [Sick leave](#)
 - Family responsibility leave [Family responsibility leave](#)
 - Family caregiver leave [Family caregiver leave](#)
 - Family medical leave [Family medical leave](#)
 - Critical illness leave [Critical illness leave](#)
 - Employees who are not able to work because of a shortage of work (layoff) related to COVID-19, school related closures, and the declared state of emergency in Ontario will also be able to apply for Employment Insurance (EI) benefits. This time away from work is deemed to be job-protected.
- Prior to layoffs, consider providing employees with the option to use paid entitlements such as vacation, banked lieu time, or overtime.
- Employment Insurance (EI) has advised on updated codes to be used for the Record of Employment related to employees being away from work as a result of COVID-19.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/notices/coronavirus.html>

- Employees may also be experiencing some fear, anxiety and stress. Remember to reach out to them frequently and provide access to your Employee and Family Assistance Program resources.

Information is being updated frequently in this rapidly changing environment. It is important to address issues as they arise on a case-by-case basis.

Stay well, wash your hands and reach out virtually or by phone to your employees, colleagues, family and friends.

Below is a list of resources for up to date health related information.

- [Public Health Ontario](#)
- [World Health Organization](#)
- [Public Health Agency of Canada](#) (24-hour hotline: 1-800-454-8302)
- Ontario Ministry of Health [The 2019 Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- Government of Canada [Employment and Social Development Canada \(COVID-19\)](#)

Support is here for you.

Please contact Mike Stapleton, Certified Financial Planner| Certified Employee Benefits Specialist directly at (416) 428-7728 or mike.stapleton@freedom55financial.com

Marcella Kowalchuk at mpkowalchuk@gmail.com for your questions related to Human Resources matters.

Spring 2020 Thinking Strategically about Your Human Resources

On March 17, 2020, the Ontario government declared a province-wide state of emergency as a result of the global COVID-19 pandemic. This announcement led to a sudden and immediate change to workplaces without providing a period of adjustment. Though change can have both positive and negative benefits, the changes that occurred in response to the pandemic have led to unprecedented experiences for employees and organizations.

In this edition of *Thinking Strategically about your Human Resources*, we are encouraging you to “**have a bias for people**,” as you are making decisions on how your organization will emerge from the impacts of the COVID-19 global pandemic. As a leader, it is important to recognize that the mental health of your employees may be compromised due to fear, anxiety and uncertainty about the future. Below are suggestions to demonstrate to your employees your care, concern and understanding during this time.

- Firstly, your employees need your true support. Whether you were required to temporary lay-off staff or were fortunate to remain operational, it is essential that you recognize the experience of your employees during this time.

Many were required to work while also teaching school-age children. Some may have had friends or loved ones become sick or even pass away, while others may have become even more financially insecure. As their leader, designate time on your calendar to check in with your employees. Remind them of the benefits offered through EFAP programs and speak with them about additional resources to aid them in building resilience and strengthening their mental health.

- Secondly, plan for the new environment in which your employees, clients, vendors, customers, colleagues and suppliers will want to operate—one in which the protection and well-being of all are considered and maintained.

This will require a review of your current health and safety practices, the implementation of physical distancing measures and increased general hygiene practices. You can also solicit ideas from employees on safety improvements to promote employee engagement.

- Thirdly, recognize that placing a low value on anyone in your organization because of the type of work they perform, through low wages harms your organization. Your leadership influence is also diminished if you are not able to recognize that employees observe how you treat others.

Review your benefit plans and determine how you may be able to provide benefits to support all employees regardless of employment status.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to light that how we treat each other has an impact on us, our organization and society at large. Rethink how you can lead in a new way that inspires your employees to be engaged, work in a state of good physical and mental health, be innovative and provide services that are exemplary. People respond well when they know they are valued for who they are and cared for by their leaders. Don't be the same leader you were before the global pandemic.

Stay well and stay safe.

Spring 2020 Thinking Strategically about Your Human Resources

For EFAP resources and benefits information, reach out to Mike Stapleton at (416) 428-7728 or mike.stapleton@freedom55financial.com.

Get your human resources questions answered by contacting Marcella at (416) 898-7387 or mpkowalchuk@gmail.com.

Additional Wellness Resources:

<https://www.guardingmindsatwork.ca/>

<https://action.camh.ca/apart-not-alone>

<https://kidshelpphone.ca/>

*"Have a bias for people," refers to a quote from Simon Sinek's speech at the [How to Academy](#) where he discussed his new book, **"The Infinite Game: How to Lead in the 21st Century"**.

Returning to Work – Considerations for Employers

It has been approximately three months since Ontario was placed under a declared state of emergency, which now has an end date of June 30, 2020. Many businesses are eagerly awaiting notice that they can reopen, while some recently received notice that they can open their doors for business. There remains the possibility that the emergency order may be extended; however, business owners must reconsider how they will operate during the COVID19 pandemic.

Health officials anticipate another wave in the fall, and in preparation, business owners must, in their recovery plans, plan for this inevitability. In this edition of ***Thinking Strategically about your Human Resources***, we are providing recommendations for you as you prepare for recovery and adapt to what is a new reality.

Here are a few considerations tips to get you started:

1. Employee Considerations:

- [Provide health and safety training and resources](#) on safe practices to ensure physical distancing is in place, the availability of personal protective equipment and hand hygiene supplies.
- Your willingness to continue to support them with managing their family responsibilities as schools remain closed, daycares, and camps slowly reopen.
- Engage in discussions about mental wellness and various [resources available](#) to lessen the anxiety and stress many employees continue to face as a result of COVID19 and the disparities it has identified. Remember to reach out your benefits provider to learn about upcoming webinars and tools for employees.
- Provide the options for flexible work arrangements through the use of technology, working-from-home and rotating work schedules to limit the amount of staff.
- Consider inviting staff to the workplace before the reopening to view the efforts you have made to adapt their work environment. This "open-house" will also provide your employees with the opportunity to make recommendations you may not have considered. Give your employees some sense of control and input into the recovery and reopening process.

2. Legal Considerations:

- The requirement to adhere to the provincial government's job-protected leaves that enable staff to remain off work as a result of the [Infectious Disease Emergency Leave \(IDEL\)](#)
- If you are not able to return all your employees to work from layoff and some were deemed terminated as a result of the permitted length of time for [temporary layoff under the Employment Standards Act](#), these employees will be considered on the IDEL. Being on the IDEL allows for employees to receive legal protection and federal income support.

Returning to Work – Considerations for Employers

- You will also need to accommodate employees who are returning to work and address those who are not read to return through the lens of your duty to accommodate obligations under the Human Rights Code. This [complimentary webinar](#) will help.
3. Financial Considerations:
- As quickly as possible, business owners need to understand the financial health of their business.
 - Schedule time to meet with your accountant to know your financial status and learn about the [financial and tax supports](#) available which can help you make it through this unprecedented time.
 - Become familiar with the changes to requirements for [filing documents and holding required meetings](#) to give your business time to focus on recovery activities
 - Adjust your thinking about where your employees work. Working from home can reduce costs in office expenses, reported sick time and other incidental fees.
 - Contractual agreements require a review to determine where efficiencies can be found, and terms amended to benefit business partnerships along the supply chain.
 - Review your original annual sales goals, and examine other possible income streams for your business.
4. Lastly, the recent local, national and global protests against anti-black racism and racism and discrimination, in general, have business owners rethinking how they will promote [diversity, equality and inclusion](#). As you plan to reopen your doors, you can anticipate that your employees, vendors, clients and other stakeholders will want to know what your commitment is going to be towards this great effort.
- Start by voicing your support
 - [Become more educated on the issue](#)
 - Be open to listening to the experiences of your employees
 - Review your business practices and policies to ensure the values of inclusivity, fairness and equality are maintained to take steps to do so.

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<https://kidshelpphone.ca/>

Better Leaders Require Time to Reflect – Fall 2020

"Do the best you can, and then when you know better, do better." This quote by poet, author and civil rights activist Maya Angelou, is a wonderful reminder of how to prepare for the possible resurgence of increased COVID-19 cases expected this fall.

In this edition of ***Thinking Strategically about your Human Resources***, we encourage you to reflect upon the lessons learned over the last few months about your business, your customers, your employees and yourself as a leader to do better.

Below we identify critical questions for you to reflect upon:

1. For Your Business:

- What products or services had an increase in demand?
- Which products or services were you required to cease providing either due to low demand or reduced supply?
- How did technology impact your ability to connect with customers?
- Where are the opportunities for innovation and modernization?
- Were you required to make any changes to your staffing models and employee schedules due to changing customer habits?
- Did you access the wage-subsidy program and other resources provided by the provincial government to support businesses?
- Are you able to sustain your business if there is another lockdown? If so, for how long?

2. Partners/Financial Institutions/Vendors/Contractors

- How have you and your stakeholders adjusted your business partnership to ensure equipment and supplies are available?
- Are you able to negotiate more favourable terms with your financial institutions?
- Is there value in all your contractual agreements?

3. Customers:

- Have your customers changed their habits?
- What have they required from you since COVID-19?
- Were you able to provide them with same level of service equal to the quality, you did in the past?

4. Employees: The mental well-being of your employees is significant and will impact their ability to work for you and take care of their family.

- What did you learn about the needs of your employees?
- What will they require from your organization as the new school year approaches and hybrid models of in-class and remote learning are planned?
- Have you been sharing with your employees the supportive resources available through your benefits provider or Employee and Family Assistance Program?

Better Leaders Require Time to Reflect – Fall 2020

5. Leading: Many have commented that the pandemic has shone a bright light on leaders' actual characteristics.

- What type of leader have you been over the last few months?
- Did you seek the opinion of others to make your decisions?
- Is greater collaboration among your team members required?
- Did you check in on your employees?
- Have you taken the necessary actions to reset the direction of your business?
- Have you become more aware of the concerns of social injustice and the need for equity that has been growing?

The above questions are designed to get you to reflect upon your business, your customers, your employees and yourself as a leader. Take the time to go through this exercise and write down your responses. The experiences of the past few months can provide you with valuable insights, which can be used to do better, if only you want to be better; in the months and years ahead.

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[COVID-19 resources available](#)

Winter 2021 – How to think strategically about Human Resources.

In early March of 2020, organizations were coping with the pandemic and trying to figure out how to work under a global, public health emergency. The switch to remote work, once taboo for many organizations, became somewhat of a norm by the end of the year.

If you recall, virtual meetings were somewhat intimidating and there were many stories of people who had embarrassing moments online. Incidents ranged from toddlers running into their parents' office interrupting serious virtual discussions, to the sound of flushing toilets for those who forgot to mute their microphones.

Often, such incidents left employees feeling embarrassed and ashamed of not seeming professional. Employers also viewed these types of virtual mishaps as an indication that their employee did not have their life in order, which was of course an unfair bias.

In present times, thankfully there has been an increase in compassion for employees who have their personal life and professional life converging in less-than-ideal ways. In this edition of ***Thinking Strategically about your Human Resources***, we focus on creating a psychological safe work environment.



Psychological safety is a term coined by Harvard Business professor Amy Edmondson. It speaks to creating a work culture where all in the workplace can show up as their authentic self. It means that an employee can show up as they truly are, without fear of repercussion, hostility, or lack of acceptance. Such an environment fosters belonging, inclusion, respect, honesty, and the dignity of the individual. In the [virtual meeting](#) environment this is as important.

In a recent article from HBR, "[9 Trends that will shape work in 2021 and beyond](#)" the author Brian Kropp, points out that Employer's will be required to support employees as they balance their life under this new work situation. In the past, Employers directly and indirectly communicated that an employee's personal life was secondary to their work responsibilities. Some Employers went so far as to refer to the workplace as a family, to the detriment of an employee's actual family. Often Employer's insisted that unrealistic expectations be met which caused some employees to choose work over their family.

With the added responsibility of managing family responsibilities, remote learning, virtual appointments, and more open conversations about mental health the perspective is beginning to shift. Employers are recognizing, as the article states the need to put in place tools and resources to help their employees deal with the integration of all of life's situations while working.

"What does this look like?"

To support employees, leaders can promote and model behaviours that demonstrates an understanding of the pressures their employees are under; after all leaders face them too.

Winter 2021 – How to think strategically about Human Resources.

- Speak of the resources available to employees frequently in written communications and virtual meetings/interactions.
- When interruptions happen, during virtual meetings, respond with calm, patience and understanding.
- Create an employee resource page, or area where employees can access information on benefits and other tools. You can include information on preparing for life changes like marriage and parenting, addressing feelings of grief and anxiety, how to get support for domestic abuse and financial advice.
- Consider offering additional time for employees to work through personal circumstances above the minimum requirements.
- Inspire and urge employees to take breaks throughout their workday.
- Promote inclusion, diversity and equity by learning about the impacts of systemic racism and biases on minority and marginalized groups, and partner with [organizations](#) and agencies to create a culture that supports equitable work practices and policies.
- Consider strategies for working in a more flexible manner and adapt schedules where possible.
- When you notice an employee is not acting or responding as they have in the past, reach out and check in and ask “How are you doing?”
- Take time to listen to employees when they ask for help and respond in a timely manner.

As a leader, it is part of your responsibility to invest the time, resources, and tools to protect, the mental well-being of your employees. Providing a psychologically safe work environment, demonstrates your commitment to your employees now and in the long-term. While this change will not occur overnight as everyone is continuing to learn about the importance of promoting wellness, building resilience and adapting to change circumstances, is a crucial step in the journey to create the workplace of the future.

Stay well and stay safe.

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For assistance with your people management questions contact Marcella at (416) 898-7387 or mpkowalchuk@gmail.com.

Additional Wellness Resources:

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[COVID-19 resources available](#)

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Spring 2021 – Thinking strategically about Human Resources

The Ian O. Ihnatowycz Institute for Leadership at Ivey Business School, part of the University of Western Ontario, held an online session as part of its “Sip & Speak Webinar Series”, entitled [*How the pandemic threatens decade of women’s labour force gains*](#). The presenters, Dawn Desjardins, Vice President, Deputy Economist for RBC and Carrie Freestone, RBC Economist, (“the Researchers”) shared data from their July 2020 [Report](#) which summarized the impact of the pandemic on women.

Highlights from the data collected noted that of the 184,000 Canadians who had dropped out of the labour market, 93% were women. This resulted in a significant decrease in the participation rate of women in the workforce, the lowest in 30 years.

For leaders and business owners this [Report](#) is worth reviewing because while the data identifies the significant and adverse outcome of the pandemic on women, it also indicates that if the participation of women equalled men, this would boost the economic input per year to \$100 billion.

In this edition of ***Thinking Strategically about your Human Resources***, we focus on ten initiatives to attract and retain talent for your business through the creation of opportunities for women. The long-term benefits which can lead to the increased participation of women in the labour force and a positive effect on the economy.

Before identifying the initiatives, it is worth noting that the Researchers acknowledged that there is a gap in the labour survey data studied as it relates to the variable of race. Nevertheless, the ten initiatives suggested below, are essential in promoting the attraction and retention of all women including those who identify as Black, Indigenous Person or Colour (BIPOC).

The initiatives listed below can be considered in conjunction with your organization’s post-pandemic recovery to plan and include the following actions:



1. Participate in activities that increase your own [knowledge and understanding](#) of the importance of creating a diverse, inclusive, and equitable workforce.
2. Speak and listen to women in your organization and [industry](#) and ask their opinion on the actions your business can take to make women feel more welcomed and seek their insights on behaviours that make it difficult for them to feel as they belong.
3. Identify mentors in the organization who are willing to share their knowledge, teach their skills and support female employees.
4. Set specific goals to increase the [representation of women](#) in all areas of your business.

Spring 2021 – Thinking strategically about Human Resources

5. Create career paths to provide for junior women to gain experience, knowledge, and skills to be eligible for senior technical positions in the future.
6. Partner with [high schools](#), post-secondary institutions and associations to create a pipeline of talent through co-operative education experiences, [apprenticeship](#) programs.
7. Invest in succession planning, networking, and stretch assignments which will allow for equal access to the key experiences that will prepare women for leadership positions.
8. Develop flexible workplace policies and practices that consider the need to balance household management with work and caregiving responsibilities.
9. Review your recruitment practices to identify biases that may exist and unintentionally exclude applications from a wide range of women and BIPOC individuals.
10. Invest in a total benefits program which provides medical and dental coverage along with holistic health and mental well-being supports, and encourages the prevention of illness, income protection and financial stability.

The competition for talent now and in the future will be decided by the ability of an organization to provide its employees with an environment where they feel welcomed and can see themselves represented at all levels of the organization. In preparing for recovery, leaders are required to make decisions now, which will attract and retain a diverse and inclusive work force. Starting on this journey begins with creating opportunities for women who have been hardest hit by the pandemic and who have significant contributions to make if provided with opened doors.

We are here to help you with the steps on this journey.

Stay well and stay safe.

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Contact Marcella by email at mpkowalchuk@gmail.com to get assistance on human resources matters related to employee engagement, strategic planning, workplace accommodations and [much more](#).

Wellness Resources:

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<https://kidshelpphone.ca/> [COVID-19 resources available](#)

The reopening and easing of restrictions have resulted in dialogue and debate about changing workplaces and work cultures. The future of work, including how work is performed, what work is deemed essential, and the impacts of employee engagement and customer preferences for personalization and individualization, is top of mind for many organizations and their leaders. For small and medium-sized businesses, who were already challenged with attracting and retaining talent, the competition for top talent has intensified.



There are considerations for millennials and their needs and the other generations of employees who, for them, working from home has helped them better manage their responsibilities and work commitments. In this edition of ***Thinking Strategically about your Human Resources***, we focus on how leaders can strengthen their partnerships with their employees, customers, and other stakeholders to create a better organization.

In an article by the Centre for Creative Leadership, entitled [How Leaders Should Approach Today's New Hybrid Workforce](#), five tips are recommended to help leaders in their quest to navigate the new world of work.

Tip #1: Acknowledge what's new and different about the hybrid workforce.

Tip #2 - Foster empathy, equity, and inclusion in your hybrid workforce.

Tip #3: Cultivate the mindsets of learning agility and resilience.

Tip #4: Pay close attention to direction, alignment, and commitment (DAC).

Tip #5 - Focus on boundary spanning — within your hybrid team and across the organization.

It is also essential for leaders to create a workplace culture through interactions with employees, clients, suppliers, and the community. This means that all aspects of your engagement with these stakeholders must align with your stated values.

- Your human resource policies and procedures must be fair, equitable, inclusive, and foster psychological safety.
- Contracts with vendors/suppliers need to be transparent, administered reasonably and be legally compliant and
- Partnerships with local community groups and associations need to be mutually beneficial
- Connect with your stakeholders to find out how to better work together

Finally, as a leader, you need to be trustworthy and demonstrate the characteristics of good leadership. Your employees, clients, customers, and the community observe what you do and pay attention to how you act. If there is any misalignment in what you espouse as a leader and your behaviours, you will be held accountable. The Ivey School of Business has conducted a great deal of research in this area and offers a [Leadership Character Framework](#). This Framework focuses on eleven (11) dimensions of character to help leaders improve.



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Additional Wellness Resources:

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<https://kidshelpphone.ca/>

[COVID-19 resources available](#)

[Your Care | CAMH](#)

Winter 2021 Thinking Strategically About Your Human Resources

Recently, in the media discussion has occurred on the topic of the "great resignation", employees who are leaving their employment at exceptionally high rates despite a time of economic uncertainty. For small and medium-sized business owners, who are already competing for talent and striving for stability and growth, there is a sense of urgency to alleviate the situations that cause staff to leave the workplace voluntarily.

In this edition of ***Thinking Strategically about your Human Resources***, we share a few perspectives on the "great resignation" phenomena and its implications for small and medium-sized businesses.

In a recent airing of [The Agenda](#) with Steve Paikin, a panel of experts including Vass Bednar, Executive Director, Master of Public Policy in Digital Society Program, McMaster University, and member of the Ontario Workplace Advisory Committee; Robyn Doolittle, Globe and Mail investigative reporter; and Deena Ladd, Executive Director, Workers Action Centre, discussed the reality of this concept for Canada's workforce.

The panellist engaged in an insightful dialogue on the nature of work, the future of work, and time and autonomy for workers. Though Canadian data is not readily available yet, what is apparent is that workers are taking the time to think about their options based on their family dynamic, level of financial security, the type of work available to them, and job security. In addition, the panellists speak about the disproportionately negative impact of the current economic environment and the pandemic on women, people of colour, indigenous workers and workers with disabilities. The key insight shared is that the working conditions for this group of workers are one of limited benefits and rights.



The Human Resource Professional Association (HRPA), *HR Insights* blog entitled "**The Great Resignation or The Great Retention?**", dated October 20, 2021, focuses on the possible reasons some workers leave their employment and actions that to retain employees.

The cause for employees exiting their workplaces include employee burnout, poor workplace culture, lack of flexibility, and lack of meaning and growth. Conversely, the suggestions made to retain staff include promoting mental health and well-being, workplace flexibility, providing more opportunities for training and employee career enhancement, a culture that fosters belong and fair total reward packages, to name a few.

In its 2017 report, "Remaining Competitive in a Challenging Talent Market Place, from the Society of Human Resources," the report identified the range of benefits provided by the employers surveyed, and the ranking of each benefit. Generally, these benefits fell into one of the following categories, Flexible Leave and Working Conditions, Investment and Retirement, Family-Friendly and Wellness, Healthcare and Health Services, and Programs and Services. Based on the data collected the report concluded that "recruiting difficulty has continued to increase over the last five years, and competition for talent is high, to attract and retain top talent, organizations must leverage the benefits package they offer to their employees".

Applying the learning from these sources, we have identified five actions leaders can take to attract employees, remain competitive and foster an environment that encourages "the great retention."

- **Action Step #1:** Speak to your employees and ask them what they need to feel like they can take care of themselves and their families.
- **Action Step #2:** Do not assume that your employees' benefit needs are based on demographics data only; instead, consider their lifestyle, career, and personal and financial goals
- **Action Step #3:** Invest in benefits that support singles and families of all types
- **Action Step #4:** Educate your employees of the benefit offerings that are available through your provider, provincially and federally
- **Action Step #5:** If you do not currently offer benefits for your employees, reach out to a Certified Employee Benefit Specialist to get more information on where to begin. It is simpler than you think to create a plan for your employees.
- **Action Step #6:** Foster a work environment of belonging, fairness, stability, and respect.

Leaders are often heard telling their employees to "take care." Leaders can enable their employees to do just that by providing the benefits they need and flexible, convenient, and relevant benefits.

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Stay well and stay safe.

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Additional Resources:

<https://www.guardingmindsatwork.ca/>

[COVID-19: Help for businesses in Ontario | COVID-19 \(coronavirus\) in Ontario](#)

[Your Care | CAMH](#)

Thinking Strategically About Human Resources – February 2022

Recently, I had the opportunity to speak with a gentleman name *Ron, who had been working for over 40 years and was nearing retirement. His career was spent in the manufacturing industry and over time Ron became one of the most trusted and valued employees within his organization.

He was well known for his upstanding character, technical skills and ability to mentor and engage younger staff. He was well respected and had a reputation for being cooperative and good at working with others to solve problems. Yet despite all that he brought to the organization, no one had met with him to understand whether he would be interested in retaining a relationship with the company post retirement. In addition, his job had not been posted, and there were no plans for an exit interview or to figure out how he would transfer all his knowledge and experience into a tangible resource for the organization. Some of his colleagues identified that the organization had no real idea of all the work Ron performed in his position, but they would soon find out.

In this edition of ***Thinking Strategically About Your Human Resources*** we discuss the importance of retaining organizational knowledge, through succession planning and maintaining meaningful relationships with your retiring employees.

Often, the departure of a tenured employees is thought about within the context of a retirement party, and a plaque. And little attention is given to the vast amount of knowledge and experience that will be leaving the business once the senior employee exits the work site on her last day. Sometimes, older employees are not viewed as valuable to a business as they reach retirement, and their contributions are spoken of in the past rather than the present or future. Such a perspective is harmful to the older employee and the business operationally.

In his work [From Strength to Strength: Finding Success, Happiness, and Deep Purpose in the Second Half of Life.](#), Harvard Business Professor Arthur Brooks writes about redefining success along with identifying two types of intelligences which individuals possess, fluid intelligence and crystallized intelligence.

Relying on the research findings of Raymond Cattell from the 1960's, Brooks in an [NPR interview](#) defines fluid intelligence as the “ability to solve problems...innovate faster and to focus harder”, and crystallized intelligence as “the ability to compile the information....to teach better, to explain better, to form teams better....and to form right questions”.



Considering the benefits of crystallized intelligence to an organization and to address the concerns of knowledge retention, business owners and their departing employees can create a mutually beneficial post-retirement relationship. Here are a few suggestions to get the process started to develop the practice of retaining organizational knowledge through succession planning.

Here are a few suggestions:

- Identify the individuals in your organization that are eligible for retirement.
- Identify the key roles in your organization based on an assessment of factors link to short- and long-term goals.
- Through interviews with your key individuals, identify all the responsibilities and duties performed by them, including the responsibilities identified in the job description and those accountabilities that have been assumed throughout their tenure
- Identify the essential customer, vendor and supplier relationships that are linked to your key roles
- Identify who are the potential employees at all levels in your organization that could move into key roles within a particular timeframe.
- Ask your key individuals, whether they can provide a recommendation for a replacement that can be trained and onboarded before the retirement occurs. Keep in mind that the ideals equity of opportunity for potential candidates

- Is this individual willing to return to our organization in some capacity to assist with knowledge transfer and share their expertise.
- For your potential retirees, identify their ability to take on mentoring or sponsorship duties before they depart your organization.
- For potential successors, determine their level of connection to your potential key retirees. If they are not connected create opportunities for them to connect through projects, mentoring groups, and informal activities
- Identify where and how your organizational is currently stored.

Following the consideration of the above, it is imperative that you consider the character traits of your departing employees before asking for them to be part of your succession planning work for it to be a productive and beneficial to your company and the individual.

- Consider how this individual achieved business and relational outcomes? Was it through a commitment to working well with others?
- Did this individual demonstrate a willingness to share information, listen to the ideas of others and value their perspective?
- Is the individual able to convey values and effective relational behaviors that are needed now and in the future?
- Does the individual want to maintain a relationship with your organization and if so, what would this look like (contract work, part-time hours)?

Do not underestimate the contributions of your senior, experienced employees. If they have been with your organization for many years, they can adapt, possess foresight and a specific set of skills that may be difficult for you to quantify or replace.

Talented employees are required for the recovery and sustainability of organizations post-pandemic. While many employees are choosing to resign under the phenomena of the “great resignation”, the potential exist to continue to engage with former employees. Encouraging them to enjoy retirement in a meaningful way through teaching and sharing their expertise. This engagement strategy can prepare your business for 2022 and beyond.

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Stay well and stay safe.

References:

[Arthur Brooks on cracking the code to happiness in the second half of life: NPR](#)

[When Working Harder Doesn't Work, Time to Reinvent Your Career - HBS Working Knowledge](#)

Job seekers look for an employer who can offer good pay, benefits, and a good working environment. Most business owners advertise opportunities stating these attributes can be found in their organization. However, in this competitive talent market, businesses must move beyond merely attracting talent to retaining and engaging top talent to perform and deliver results that meet organizational goals.

In this *Total Rewards Series – Thinking Strategically About Human Resources*, we will continue to apply the insights from **HR Manager's Guide to Total Rewards (“Guide”)**, written by Claudine Kapel, Alina Mitchell and Barbara Schaff, to highlight **the elements that are required for developing a total rewards strategy**.

In the first of two parts of the spring edition, we also summarize three of the six key considerations; **Needs of the Business, Needs of Employees, Competitive Market practice, Cost and Affordability, Message Alignment and Risk Management** for framing your total rewards strategy, as noted in the **Guide**. In our later spring edition, we will address the other three considerations.

Needs of the Business



Developing a total rewards strategy requires a clear understanding of the organization's mission, values, purpose and goals. Once this is understood, business leaders need to obtain the data that identifies their stakeholder requirements and preferences along with the political, technological, economic, social and legislative that impact their industry. This business intelligence will provide management with the information needed to determine the type of talent required to

plan, implement and execute their business strategy.

In determining how to attract, retain and engage the right individuals to work for them, business leaders must also consider what they can offer as part of their employer value proposition and whether they want to lead their competitors in what they provide to current and future employees.

Needs of Employees

The employment contract has evolved, and employees' needs have changed. The workforce of today consists of multiple generations with varying expectations from potential employers. Employees are in a better position to expect not only a competitive salary but benefits and programs, which include access to mental health supports, work-life balance, flexible work options, growth and development opportunities, and of course, compliance with labour legislation.

To achieve business objectives and meet the needs of employees, organizations can incentivize employees to behave in a manner that leads to the desired results. For example, employees value growth and opportunity. If an organization relies on lower-skilled workers to be a pipeline for higher-skilled roles in the organization, it can use access to tuition supports as a strategy to retain and upskill these employees to develop talent from within rather than rely solely on external hiring.

Competitive Market Practice

Leaders need to consider how every aspect of their total rewards strategy will meet the needs of the business, satisfy the majority of the employees, that they stay engaged while also being mindful of their competitor's offerings.

Within the marketplace, organizations grapple with determining where they want to position themselves in the competitive market for talent. Consideration is given to what programs should be provided, how those programs are distributed across the workforce, and how this would compare to what their competition is providing. To answer such questions, organizations participate in comparator surveys to understand where they may be leading or lagging behind with what they offer.

In addition, with the elimination of non-compete agreements in employment contracts, employers can no longer restrict employees from engaging in employment with a competitor after the employment relationship has ended. In response, a business may develop a total rewards program that leads its competitors in providing stock options and car allowances for critical talent while lagging behind in another program, such as parental leave top-up.

The [Needs of the Business](#), the [Needs of Employees](#) and [Competitive Market Practice](#) are only part of the dynamic and complex factors that are to be considered when developing a total rewards strategy. In part II of this spring series, we will focus on the other three considerations, [Cost and Affordability](#), [Message Alignment](#) and [Risk Management](#), which are necessary aspects for framing a total rewards strategy that aligns with your business objectives.

Please get in touch with us to address any questions about this article or how you can utilize total rewards to enable your business goals.

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Stay well and stay safe. Happy Spring

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