





**dissatisfaction and work stress**

Health Reports: [Work satisfaction, stress and depression](#), Statistics Canada, 2002.

Statistics Canada published a report in 2002 on the dissatisfaction levels of Canadian workers. A relatively high proportion of them work in the sales and service sectors, the transformation and manufacturing sectors or in the public service.

**The reasons?** Work stress, shift work and low incomes.

**Stress and dissatisfaction are clearly linked:** among workers who felt that their workdays were extremely stressful, 1 in 4 was dissatisfied with his or her job. However, among those workers for whom stress was not really a problem, only 1 in 15 was dissatisfied.

**Differences between men and women?** Sources of stress do not seem to be the same for men and women according to this report, which tries to draw a link between work stress and depression. Therefore, high levels of stress and strong constraints at work are associated with depression among men but not among women. For women, depression was mostly related to personal stress and a lack of support from colleagues. A challenge reconciling one's private and professional lives?

**Mobilization and overall performance: a sea monster?**

According to personnel mobilization and a review of current research and its implications

Conference Board Report by John Gibbons

(For sale at [www.conference-board.org](http://www.conference-board.org))

As announced in the last issue, here are the results of the Conference Board Study.

In 2004 the CLC (Corporate Leadership Council) revealed that strongly mobilized employees performed 20% better than demobilized employees.

Yet again in 2004 a Bates study on the sales staff productivity (insurance) revealed a 25% performance gap between those who were mobilized and those who weren't.

In 2005 Towers Perrin carried out a study showing that a 5-point increase in mobilization yielded a 0.7% increase in operating margins.

The most serious and valid study is still that of Hewitt in 2004. She was able to prove that the correlation of previous studies was cause and effect. The study, which lasted 5 years, showed that mobilization growth preceded the overall increase in companies' financial performance.

**What about customer service?**

The most striking study is the one by Oakley. It proved that increasing mobilization leads to an increase in customer loyalty, especially if the mobilization increase occurs among people who do not have direct contact with the client. Mobilization in the back and middle offices has a beneficial effect on the corporate image, product quality and process reliability.

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*Engaging employees through high-involvement work practices*

Par Alison M. Konrad,

*IVEY Business Journal  
 March/April 2006*

**This is a message that bears repeating:** there is a link between the mobilization of employees and the consequent performance of an organization.

The mobilization of company personnel is developed in three components: a behavioural component, an emotional component and a cognitive component.

**Cognitive:** the perceptions and beliefs that employees have about their organization, its leaders and their own working conditions

**Emotional:** feelings that employees have toward the organization and its leaders

**Behavioural:** employee practices revealing extra effort in their work (overtime, involvement, energy invested, etc.)

**How can management nurture this three-dimensional mobilization?** By implementing "mobilizing" practices such as:

- **Empowering their employees**
  - Decision making, accountability
- **Keeping them informed**
  - Give them access to qualitative and quantitative data on performance, production, customer satisfaction, market trends
- **Training them**
  - Develop their abilities and competencies
- **Recognizing their work**
  - Recognize their performance, investment, challenges met

The challenge is to implement these practices and ensure that they are aligned to the context. To that effect, the author explains the benefits of a "self-design" approach, which allows the members of each unit to develop specific approaches with respect to these mobilization practices. By participating in the design and implementation of these practices, employees and managers alike acquire the experience and competencies needed to successfully change their practices.

*Are we going to miss the talent turn-around?*

This is the question that Cory Garlbrough of Scotia Bank and Linda White (Global Performance and Learning office) address to expert Stephen Covey (author of *The 7 habits of highly effective people* in an article of *Training* magazine of April 2007). The answer is obviously yes.

**First, because of organizational short sightedness.** They do not have a clear view of the current economic tsunami. According to Mr. Covey, in developed countries, 20 years ago 80% of labour costs involved physical work, whereas today, 80% of labour costs are concerned with intellectual capital.

What is intellectual capital? He cites a definition quoted by Thomas Stewart "intellectual capital is intellectual material: knowledge, information, intellectual property, experience, all of which can be used to create wealth. It is collective intellectual power. That is difficult to identify and even more difficult to deploy efficiently. But once you are able to do that and exploit it you are a winner.

**Second, managing talent must cover all of the human resources spectrum** (recruiting, staffing an overall remuneration) and not only training and development. However, currently, HR is limited to training and development.

**The third and last element** is the inordinate use of the industrial model in a "brain" economy governed by different principles. The industrial model is based on practices and processes, whereas the new economic order rests meaning and the broad principles that focus actions in order to foster the creativity needed and expected from today's workers. It is this basic difference that underlines on a daily basis the current rift between generations (baby-boomers vs. Generation X).



### THIS MONTH'S FIGURES

**Canada: Satisfaction work stress** (Source: Wright C, Devereaux MS, Riggs B. *Stress and depression in the working population, Health Reports*, vol.17, #4, 2006. Statistics Canada.)

% of persons enduring intensive daily stress	Men	Women
Managers	37%	43%
Professionals / Technicians	28%	31%
Administration / Finance / clerical	32%	30%
Sales / services	23%	25%
Commerce / Transportation	20%	26%
Transformation / Manufacturing, Public Services publics	21%	29%
All workers	25%	29%

#### Figures that make you stop and think:

- More people in management positions face intense stress on a daily basis, for an average of 40%
- Taking income levels into account, those enduring the most stress are making \$60 000 or more annually
- People between 40 to 54 years of age experience Intense stress most often

#### TRENDS: Nomadic Businesses.

Jacques Attali has just published: *Brève histoire de l'avenir* (Brief History of the Future). He reveals his vision of tomorrow's **nomad!** businesses.

With the growing momentum of de-localizations, globalization and the mushrooming information technologies, business will no longer have to be sedentary. There will be two categories: temporary groups of individuals or long-term tribal gatherings.

**The first category: the theatre-troupe model** gathering capital and competencies, for a term project. The life expectancy of the enterprise will depend on its capacity to reinvent itself, find financiers, and appeal to the public. Businesses will have a shorter lifespan than workers so work will be flexible, precarious and less stable. Some companies will be tiny multinationals comprising several people scattered all over the world. Creative work is what will generate wealth.

**The second category: the circus model or film studios**, built around a name, a story or a project. These businesses will gather several groups together and will travel constantly. Boards of Directors will be made up of very well paid governance professionals. Management will be flexible as to operations, focused with respect to marketing, and mentors in developing creativity among staff and loyalty among clients. To retain personnel, companies will have to offer what nations no longer can deliver: training, health and safety. Brand will be the biggest asset.

The main circuses will be machine tools, motors, grocery, household appliances, apparel, transportation, tourism, distribution, beauty, physical shape, entertainment, energy, information, finance, insurance, defence, health and education, the last three going from public to private jurisdiction.

"Businesses will cease to be hierarchies and will become labyrinths. They will evolve from uniform structures into mega corporations made up of local businesses."



Here is our fall 2007 edition of OMI INFO. The OMI team sincerely hopes that you had a terrific – and motivating – summer. In this edition we look at how to fight a lack of productivity by dispensing dopamine, getting rid of “jerks” and modifying the work setting. You will also have to learn to depend on followers and those approaching retirement.

ARTICLE SUMMARY AND COMMENTARY

Building a healthy and civilized workplace: getting rid of “jerks”

*Building the civilized workplace.*

The work climate grows out of interactions among individuals: communication, openness to differing opinions, manager/employee relations. These interactions among individuals are built on peoples’ attitudes. Robert Sutton looked at companies that wilfully and openly decided to get rid of any individuals who were harmful to the working environment in their organizations: jerks.

By Robert Sutton, published in *The McKinsey Quarterly*, 2007, Issue No. 2

Who is a jerk? A person who regularly and deliberately stirs negative emotions in others: people feel oppressed in their company or after having dealt with them and feel humiliated and put down.

How to spot a jerk: the 12 horrific examples below are strong indicators; jerks will:

1. Insult people
2. Invade their colleagues personal space
3. Make inappropriate physical contact
4. Threaten others verbally or non-verbally
5. Make sarcastic comments or off-colour jokes
6. Sending scathing e-mails
7. Use their position to humiliate others
8. Publicly reprimand a colleague or subordinate
9. Interrupt others
10. Insinuations
11. Dirty looks
12. Treat people as if they weren't there

An organization that tolerates jerks stands to suffer consequences: internally – employee demotivation – and externally, damage to the company's reputation, customer relations, and its ability to attract the best talent. The fallout from the behaviour of such individuals is substantial: loss of productivity, lower work satisfaction, and sometimes even mental and physical health problems. Why is nothing done when it is clear that such behaviour is disastrous for the organization? Either management is blind and doesn't notice the behaviour or they see it and decide to keep the individuals.

Some companies have adopted the “no-jerk rule” known to all, and do not tolerate certain types of behaviour. A case in point is Southwest Airlines, for whom employee attitudes are a key issue. By issuing a clear directive to employees inside and associates outside the company: no

cerce de la  
MOBILISATION



behaviour that is harmful to the workplace climate will be tolerated, the company ensures that the interest of employees and the workplace climate is a priority issue and as a result finds it easier to attract talented people.

However, having a "no-jerk" rule doesn't mean that you have eliminated all potential conflict. On the contrary, the idea is to stimulate the airing of conflicting ideas, the exchange of different viewpoints, but doing it a respectful and interesting manner.

Note from SECOR: we are not looking to instigate a "jerkhunt"! "Jerks" are people who regularly and frequently display the above-mentioned negative attitudes.

*Hand out dopamine on a regular basis.*

Excerpted from

*Gallup Management Journal,*

August 9, 2007

The Gallup Groups 12 management principles are well known today, but the authors get a lot of criticism regarding the 7 day cycle referred to in the 4<sup>th</sup> principle! The fact is their 4<sup>th</sup> principle states that there must be positive feedback within the **last 7 days**. Apparently this principle is hardly ever adhered to. Why? The answer to that lies not in management theory but in neurology. The brain needs positive reinforcement to release dopamine; however, the effects of dopamine wear off after just a few minutes. That is why you need it often. Unfortunately, the human condition is such that the negative side regains the upper hand much too quickly. The authors remind us that:

- Our psychology drives us to seek compliments more than to pay them,
- Our gene pool is programmed to have us believe to miss seeing something interesting is disappointing, but to miss seeing something serious or unpleasant could be fatal.

That is why we have a natural tendency not to pay compliments and see the negative side of things.

There are a lot of studies on the subject (people vote against rather than for, they lose in order to gain more, we pick up on angry facial expressions rather than happy ones, etc.). Researchers call this a "negative information bias". In a fast-paced world, the phenomenon is growing.

What this means in everyday life is that if an employee expects some sign of recognition for his work and doesn't get it or if his boss remains silent, the employee's dopamine drop, and this harms productivity. When people don't get their dopamine fix at work, they look for it elsewhere.

A prevalent excuse to not give positive reinforcement is based on the saying that "no news, good news," but the reality is that the saying simply does not apply to this situation. Others say that they are simply not good at but the authors underline that no leader explains his poor financial results by saying he is not good in math!

We often see these patterns at a company's organizational level after receiving the OMI questionnaire filled out by their staff. It is the notorious "hollow" in the performance management chain. The objectives are quite clear, but the feedback criteria are much less so due to the lack of positive feedback. So people are expecting recognition and not getting any. They quickly come to the conclusion that their company and their manager do not give recognition, but the same thing applies to their colleagues within the organization!

Possible solution: the next time you want to give negative feedback, remember that a hamburger is always better wrapped in a bun! So give positive feedback: express your dissatisfaction with the item that needs improvement and end the discussion on a positive note! The dopamine will stimulate the effort invested in corrective action.



*Followers  
qualities.*

"The boss can't do everything!" That is a phrase that is often heard in organizations. "The CEO spends a lot of time in conferences, luncheons and etc." It's true, leaders can't do everything, They have to delegate work to followers. This reminds us to mention some old principles developed in leader/follower theories.

Interesting  
Sources: Kelley, R.E., *In Praise of Followers*, Harvard Business Review (oct-nov 1988); Chaleff, I. *The courageous follower, Standing up to and for Our Leaders*, San Francisco, CA, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc, 2002.

R.E. Kelley, in a rather old article, said that there had to be efficient followers behind a leader "...when a company has efficient followers, the leader tends to have more of a guidance role in managing change and progress rather than a hero. As organizations adopt structures that are more and more horizontal, the quality of those followers becomes more and more critical." He discerns 4 qualities efficient followers will have:

- **They can manage their responsibilities quite well on their own**, because they have a lot of confidence in themselves, they agree to follow but know that they are the equal of their leader;
- **They are mobilized around a common higher mission**: they work for the common good of the organization and adhere to common values and principals; if they perceive that their own values are different from those of the leader, they say so or leave the company without sending contradictory messages within the organization,
- **They strengthen their strong points**: they set high performance standards for themselves and are continually learning and updating their skills; they look for responsibilities beyond their comfort zone (question 5 of the OMI is a partial test of that component)
- **They take risks**: they are credible team leaders, are honest and speak their minds; they give credit where it is deserved and admit their mistakes, they keep their teams and superiors clearly informed of what is going on.

The development of a follower's competencies is not easy to do in an organization, which explains why these articles remain current. One of the problems brought up by all the authors is that power is expressed in a parent child relationship rather than a relationship between adults (consenting adults, according to one of our colleagues, Claude Desjardins). Leaders should therefore continue to develop a work climate in which followers feel they have support and are in a position to challenge the leader if need be for the good of the organization.



**What to do when it is time to retire?**

According to a recent survey done in Canada by Robert Half Management Resources<sup>1</sup>, one third of workers plan on not working at all after they retire (N=492).

*New survey: a majority of workers plan to delay their retirement date, press release from CNW Telbec*

When the time comes to retire, do you think that you will stop working altogether or will you exercise one of the following options:	
Stop working altogether	34%
Change fields and do something completely different	24%
Work as an expert consultant	14%
Work for the same company but a shorter work week	14%
Find a part-time job	2%
Continue working / not planning on retiring	2%
Do volunteer work	1%
Other	3%
Don't know	6%

Paul McDonald, Executive Director of RHMR explains: " The desire of many professionals to keep on foot in the business world at a traditional retirement age could be a blessing for employers who worry about a lack of skilled manpower, a situation that will likely get worse.

The main factors behind these results are: greater life expectancy, increased financial responsibilities and mostly the desire to remain physically and mentally active.

The situation in the U.S. is pretty similar because according to figures published by the American Census Bureau at the beginning of August 2007, nearly one American in four between the ages of 65 and 74 continues working after retirement; a net increase over 2000<sup>2</sup>.

A University of Chicago study shows that most of these workers are "very happy" with their jobs and that their delayed retirement was because they loved their work and was not for financial reasons.

<sup>1</sup> see [www.roberthalfmr.com](http://www.roberthalfmr.com)

<sup>2</sup> One in four retirees continues to work in the united States, *La Presse*, 12/09/2007

**KICKERS**

***Knock out six productivity enemies.***

Drawn from  
*Les Affaires.com,*  
 August, 28 2007

What is the secret to work productivity? The Institute for Business Technology (IBT) carried out a Canadian study in 2005 of 800 employees. What are these so-called productivity enemies?

1. Talkative anxious or boorish colleagues
2. Meeting mania
3. Habits that get on peoples' nerves
4. E-mails and guess what – the BlackBerry
5. The telephone
6. Micro managing

Some interesting – and disturbing figures:

- 6.3 hours a week invested responding to “do you have a couple of minutes?”
- 6.1 hours a week on average spent on meetings

Good productivity is a positive influence on the working climate, which in turn stimulates mobilization. Eliminating certain irritants and barriers to productivity contributes to the sense of accomplishment. What a concept!

***When ergonomics rhymes with performance.***

Drawn from *Le confort au travail, une priorité,*  
*La Presse Affaires,*  
 10/09/2007

Autres sources pertinentes:

*Influence of the physical environment on work performance ( productivity).*  
<http://www.gret.umontreal.ca>

*Mission impossible or mission accomplished? Assessment of a universal furniture standard for all workspaces at Desjardins Financial Security.*  
<http://www.gret.umontreal.ca>

Once we set aside the traditional work stress factors such as workload, management style or tight deadlines, it would seem that managing lesser details related to office comfort are drawing some attention. Re-fitting workspaces, for example, is very trendy right now.

A study by the *Groupe de recherche sur l'environnement de travail* (workplace environment research group) (GRET) of the *Université de Montréal* shows that temperature variations, a lack of windows or noisy cubicles increase unnecessary stress and harm productivity. Noise, in particular, is a significant anxiety factor.

Companies are adopting practices aimed at reducing workplace stress such as banning speakerphone calls, standardizing workstations, etc. Aware that 50% of their employees are moved transferred within the company, Desjardins Financial Security chose to standardize their workstations to reduce the inconveniences that arose when people were reassigned (furniture, office size, etc.) and to fix ventilation, lighting and acoustical problems.

According to the GRET team, this new “functional comfort” at DFS increased employee satisfaction and performance thanks to space saved and reduced moving costs.



Already into the 7th edition – a very biological one – so mobilize your brains, burn off the toxins, and lend an ear. Yet this edition is also a very practical one: managing change is always current and nods in this issue to e-mailing and concierge services! Enjoy.

ARTICLE SUMMARY AND VIEWPOINT

**Mobilize minds  
“from within”**

Organizations often neglect an important factor when it is time to mobilize minds: people's inner life or psychic reality at work. Workers' daily lives are shaped by different perceptions and emotions that can affect their motivation at any time.

**Inner Work Life  
Understanding  
the Subtext of  
Business  
Performance**

Teresa M.  
Amabile et  
Steven J. Kramer,  
*Harvard Business  
Review*,  
May 2007.  
pp. 72-82

Amabile and Kramer, professors at Harvard University, wanted to understand how the dynamics of perception, emotion and motivation affects knowledge workers. 238 professionals, in 26 teams working on different projects kept a daily diary during the whole cycle of their project. The researchers were thereby better able to understand the dynamics of the inner work life, its effect on employees, which directly affects the organization as well. The results of the study revealed the existence of a particular set of dynamics, which corroborated research carried out in neuroscience.

The dynamics involved work as follows: certain daily events at work set off a cognitive, emotional and motivational process. From then on, the brain starts to rationalize and understand why a particular event happened and what the implications are. These perceptions feed emotions that spawn new impressions. Depending on the impact of these emotional cognitive dynamics, motivation can change in either a positive or negative fashion, either of which will affect a worker's performance!

Among other things, the behaviour of one's supervisor can be an irritant or a motivator. **Everyone has their own psychic reality**, which cannot be perceived by others, or even by oneself, which creates communication problems. So employees can observe their supervisors' behaviour but cannot necessarily decode their supervisor's inner lives, nor do the supervisors have insight into the inner work lives of their employees.

When comparing the best and worst days recorded in the daily diaries, **the discriminating factor is the subjective feeling of being able to advance one's work**. Resolving problems, finishing a task, reaching one's objectives always bring satisfaction and even joy at work. The worst days – the ones that are really frustrating, sad and stressful – are characterized by a reversal at work.

The study shows that most events that affect the way you live your inner work life stem directly or indirectly from management style. Two managerial qualities stand out: human qualities and the ability to develop their employees. **Management style has a very strong influence on the personnel's inner work life**. For example, a reading of one of the participant's diaries shows her to be very enthusiastic and even transported by the fact that the team is working closely together. Also, she feels more valued as an individual and as a worker when her colleagues, and especially her project director, tell her how skilful she is. These perceptions, and the emotions they generate, are obviously very motivating for this employee. If employees are sad or angry about their work, they will not care if the work is done conscientiously or not. But, if they are happy and enthusiastic, they will apply themselves to their work, sparing no effort. The same logic applies to perceptions: if people feel they are increasing the value of the work they are much more motivated!

Some proven management practices for efficient employee development are: collaborate with

cercle de la  
MOBILISATION



and help the team, be available, provide sufficient support (training, materials, information, deadlines etc.) and give feedback with a view to personnel development as opposed to personnel evaluation. Setting clear and precise individual and team objectives is also important. People make more progress when their managers clarify what the value added part of the work consists of and indicate how the employee can make a difference through the quality of his or her personal contribution. Finally, **the main engine of a good quality inner work life is the recognition managers give to their employees when underlining excellent performances.**

A positive "inner life" can have a good effect on performance. The result of this study show that:

- The link is strong and positive: people perform better when their work stimulates positive emotions, responding with an inherently strong motivation, positive perception of their work, their colleagues, their team, their superior and their organization.
- When teams have to work closely together, optimum performance depends on four factors: creativity, productivity, commitment and cohesiveness.
- Positive emotions influence creativity.
- Intrinsic motivation reinforces creativity. People are more creative when they are doing meaningful work, when they are enjoying themselves, when they are satisfied with and challenged by their work, than when they are enticed by monetary incentives or subjected to external pressures.

***SECOR's point of view is centred on the motivation dimension of the mobilization model, and this article demonstrates the full impact of management style on employee motivation and performance, especially with respect to creativity.***

**no news ≠  
good news,  
meaning :  
listen to the  
sounds of  
silence**

Taken from an article by Jacinthe Tremblay, published in *La Presse Affaires* on October 9, 2007

A recent study revealed that one out of three victims of organizational injustice chooses to stay silent, in spite of help offered by those organizations (human resources, EAP or an ombudsman).

Even if the reasons for the silence are not all to do with organizational issues, managers should not necessarily think that a silent employee is a happy one! In most cases, people remain silent out of fear, namely of reprisals, especially if the victim has any doubt about the confidentiality of the redress process. Some also fear that their complaint will not be followed up and that, in the end, nothing will change. However, you have to distinguish between **healthy silences**, which indicate that attention has been paid to a healthy work environment, and **unhealthy silences**. Let's take the example of a manager who is unhappy that none of his employees have said a word during meetings for the last six-months. However, the employees actually had a lot to say, in particular about the behaviour of the said manager. The reason for their silence was the fear they had of the unrelenting rise of the manager's performance expectations.

Silence is also an instrument to exert power and control others; for example in the case of psychological harassment where the harasser tries to hide information, avoids contact or looks daggers at the victim. The victim starts to doubt his or herself and loses confidence.

***SECOR's viewpoint: Organizations are not aware of how extensive the silence may be because they are convinced they have done everything to listen to their people. In addition to the negative impact on people (unnecessary stress, for example), unhealthy silence has a negative impact on the organization's performance: demobilization, resignations, deviant behaviour, etc. managers should therefore ask why there is silence and never just assume that silence is good news. In line with that approach, internal mobilization surveys can provide clues as to the answers, provided that the employee is***

cercle de la  
MOBILISATION



***comfortable with the methods used (confidentiality), to questions concerning management style. Then there are the open questions that give employees a chance to really let loose and break the “omerta” or code of silence (if necessary)!***

<sup>1</sup> Karen Harlos, teacher specializing in organizational behaviour and employee silence

**Respecting deadlines is the preferred asset looked for among team members.**

A recent survey of over 100 top Canadian company executives done for Accountemps, shows that 39 % of executives believe the most important character trait of a team member is his or her ability to meet deadlines. The next most important thing is that the person be easy to work with (31 %).

To the question, “What is the most important characteristic you think a team member should have?” executives responded:	
Meet deadlines	39 %
Easy to work with	31 %
Support his/her supervisor	17 %
Not into power tripping	10 %
Don't know	3 %
TOTAL	100 %

Max Messmer, Chairman of the Board at Accountemps, explains: “team spirit” has become such a cliché that it has lost all meaning. Essentially, it covers people who fulfill their obligations and support their colleagues. Those qualities have always been important but they are especially so now that co-operation, or teamwork, is such a critical part of work these days.

***SECOR’s viewpoint: an adjustment back to efficiency, an 8-point difference for meeting deadlines over a nice personality, which is significant. Let’s still be nice but it is not our only byword; it is important but it is in second place. This problem comes up often in OMI questionnaires in reference to needless delays, which are almost invariably linked to a lack of co-ordination between teams and sometimes within teams.***



### Driving radical change

By Josep Isern and  
Caroline Pung  
*The McKinsey  
Quarterly*, 2007,  
number 4

Bringing about major changes within an organization is a huge challenge. Success stories are rare and the upheavals that follow are often disastrous. And there numerous recipes for implementing change: this is yet another article, published in *The McKinsey Quarterly*, to add to the list of those highlighting two fundamentals of change management:

1. It is important to clearly define the goals/vision of the change project
2. It is vital to mobilize the troops, maintain energy levels and generate ideas

#### What are the prerequisites for radical change?

Successfully implementing radical change means that the goals must be defined, communicated and understood at all levels of the company.

- These goals must be concretely linked to which functions or ways of doing things will be affected by the changes and how. This clarification and communication exercise reduces the level of organizational anxiety that is naturally raised by any change project.
- Short-term initiatives and objectives must be tangible. People affected by radical change should have an idea of how the company is going to evolve over time, and be able to refer to short, mid and long-term objectives. Identifying mid-project goals anchors the changes.
- The aspirations and initiatives have to be part of an inspiring story. This story should be repeated in all the communications. The use of metaphors and analogies is recommended.

In addition, beyond a clear and shared vision, major change projects have to be supported by **organizational energy and strong mobilization**. Just as gasoline powers an engine, organizational energy moves the change engine. How do we accomplish this?

1. Maintain the pace of change. Radical change translates into multiple change initiatives that have to be implemented simultaneously to sustain an active pace.
2. Make the changes as highly visible as possible.
3. Personalize the change for everyone at all levels of the organization.
4. Develop organizational competencies in order to adapt to the change.

***SECOR's viewpoint: this article illustrates to what extent understanding the reasons for change and feeling involved in them are so important to mobilizing workers, especially by giving meaning to these changes! This is nothing new, just a reminder of solid, healthy principles to be applied again and again and again. You don't think so? Just look at the results from question 17 of the OMI.***



KICKERS

**Say hello to no-e-mail Fridays**

*Le Devoir.com*  
October 7, 2007

Wednesday morning, first thing to do at the office: check your e-mails. Ten new e-mails came in overnight, most of them from colleagues sitting five meters away.

The stunning fact is that e-mails are replacing face to face contact. Faster, yes, but more efficient? Nothing could be less sure.

To fight this growing trend, some American companies have inaugurated no-e-mail Fridays. On Fridays, staff are asked to communicate directly in person or by phone. This interesting test is helpful in assessing peoples' preferences as well as seeing to what extent we can return to less impersonal ways of communicating!

***SECOR's viewpoint: getting back to basics every once in a while. Communicating is just as much about the relationship as the content. E-mails transmit content efficiently, but do they help reinforce the relationship? It is really not clear that they do.***

**Thanks for the concierge services!**

*LaPresseAffaires.com*  
October 1, 2007

How much would you be willing to pay to have someone find you a repairman after 6 pm to come and fix your washer? How much is it worth to have someone take your clothes to the cleaners or to make 25 phone calls to find a daycare in your neighbourhood? Priceless? These are the kinds of personal services certain employers are willing to provide to attract and retain their staff. Some companies allow their employees to bank offer "Commodus" points to be exchanged against quality-of-life services, save time or enhance peoples' well being.

This is something that is already widely implemented in France. The success of these initiatives has to be based on an enticing tax structure, both for the employers and their employees.

What a way to advertise as an employer of choice! For more information: [www.commodus.ca](http://www.commodus.ca)

**Filter those noxious toxins; we will all be better off!**

*Emotions in the workplace and the important role of toxin handlers* par Peter J. Frost, *Yvey Business Journal*, November/December 2003.

**Leaders inevitably create emotional pain, through the toxins that are a by-product of their actions;** those toxins are the negative emotional reactions of employees, inevitable side-effects of the leaders decisions; people must become aware of them and learn what to do the fend them off, and toxin handlers are the ones to help them do it.

**Who are these toxin handlers? People who detect psychological stress** or negative emotions in their colleagues and act to correct the situation by blocking the blows or by diminishing the negative consequences. The author gives the example of Savannah, a manager in charge of a new promotion program based on performance rather than seniority and which was getting very mixed reactions from managers in the organization. How did she handle the toxins? For example, she intercepted an insulting memo addressed to one of her team members by a senior manager. She responded by asking the manager in question to send all future correspondence directly to her. In another instance she prevented a manager from having her team move into smaller, less attractive space. That was a preventive action. However, sometimes a toxin handler has to repair damage. That is the case of Michael, who spends a lot of time just listening to colleagues who were chewed out by the CEO, an impatient man. **Handlers are people who are interested in the well being of both people and the organization.** They know that their work is not

cerce de la MOBILISATION

recognized but take satisfaction in knowing they are helping others.

The 5 techniques of toxin handlers:

1. **Listening:** means being available and take the time needed (not always that long).
2. **Holding space for healing:** providing a private office, a different office or at another location, or in lightening the workload.
3. **Buffering pain:** as Savannah did when she intercepted the insulting memo.
4. **Extricating others from painful situations:** for example, transferring someone to a more motivating work setting.
5. **Transforming pain:** the example given is that of a former HBC (Hudson's Bay Company who helped his staff through difficult changes by encouraging them to create an action plan that would help them through stressful times at work and to find time to take care of their personal lives as well.

However, being a toxin handler is a **dangerous occupation** that requires a game plan some el:

- **Keep fit:** do aerobic and relaxation exercises.
- **Stay positive:** look at situations as learning opportunities and not as toxins, do not take things personally, be patient, keep your sense of humour and accept that some things cannot be resolved to everyone's satisfaction.
- **Say "no" more often:** toxin handlers who are too empathetic have a hard time saying no and have to learn that nor does not mean "never" or "no, I can't help you," but can mean, "not right now, but how about tomorrow," or "no, I can't but I know someone who can," or "no, I can't do that, but I could do this ».
- **Create a sanctuary:** as an example, Ronald Heifetz of the Center for Public Leadership of the Kennedy School of Government (Harvard) spent five minutes every day reading an e-mail from a friend, who was a religious scholar and mystic, and meditating on the philosophical issue therein.
- **Manage the message:** toxin handlers have to make it clear to the organization that their work helps others and is beneficial to the organization as a whole over time.
- **Leave the site:** sometimes the situation becomes so toxic that the toxin handler has to leave.

***SECOR's viewpoint: this is an old but still very relevant un article. The toxin metaphor is also very relevant, the toxin handler acts like a set of white corpuscles or the kidneys of the human organism, and organizations have a huge need for such people and take good care of them!***

BY THE NUMBERS

Does it pay to mobilize workers?

Yes, yes and yes if we are to believe the latest worldwide study by Tower Perrin querying 90 000 people around the world, including 5 000 in Canada.

Preliminary Findings: in companies where the mobilization level is high, the bottom line rose 13.7 % whereas it diminished by 3.8 % where mobilization was low. Mobilization is therefore a performance catalyst! To be continued in the next issue of INFO OMI.