

Worldwide Training Industry News (Jul 09)

MentorNet Provides Success and Service Michigan Tech News (07/24/09) Gagnon, John

Michigan Technological University's (MTU's) MentorNet program matches students and new educators with mentors in either educational or professional positions to help graduate students, postdoctorates, and untenured professors (proteges) achieve academic and professional success through exposure to the world of work. MentorNet connects mentors and proteges for about 20 minutes a week for eight months, based on background or career interest. Proteges and mentors talk about school, internships, the job market, and running a business, among other topics. "I decided to become involved because I didn't have a mentor when I was going through school," says Derek Curtis, who came to MentorNet through ACM and is a mentor to Darius Watt, a fourth-year operations and systems management student. "It would have been great to have someone with whom I could have discussed career choices and options to help me make better informed decisions." MentorNet program manager Susan Liebau says that since launching MentorNet on campus in 1999, 360 students have used the service. Liebau likes to pair proteges with MTU alumni. MentorNet was originally intended to reach out to women and minorities in engineering, but the program has expanded to involve more people in more disciplines, though a focus on women is still present. "I am committed to seeing that the next generation of women has an easier time in the academic community, and MentorNet helps a lot," says University of Texas at El Paso professor Diane Doser, who graduated from MTU in 1978.

The Globalization of Coaching Human Resource Executive (07/09) Starner, Tom

Coaching is going global and is on the rise, according to research conducted by Frank Bresser Consulting. Approximately 33 percent of countries from all continents are in the growth phase, 50 additional countries are in the introduction phase, and 50 percent do not have any coaching at all. No countries are seeing a decline in coaching. Not all participants were American or European, either. Among the top 10 countries in the world with the highest number of business coaches, there are also Asian, African, and South American countries represented. While one-on-one business coaching is the traditional form, other styles, such as ones where coaching principles are integrated into organizational life are being more popular. For example, the coaching-leadership style is being introduced in many countries, and it is most widely used in the Philippines. Coaching is also being used at every level of the organization, not just senior managers and executives. "There are unique, creative-to-create programs that are scalable and can reach more people in a cost-effective manner," says Karissa Thacker, a New York-based executive coach. "While coaching is not decreasing in terms of use, it also is becoming a more cost-effective tool in the current recession." "Brief" coaching and peer coaching are on the rise and are considered to be individual coaching techniques. Companies have also found that coaching high-potential employees and expatriates can improve business success. Businesses now consider coaching to be less of an executive perk and more of a way to increase business results. Debra Condren, founder of Manhattan Business Coaching, notes that coaching is on the rise during the recession because organizations are now more aware of the fact that it is expensive to inaccurately hire someone, since rising turnover costs are hard to deal with. Talented employees appreciate the knowledge they gain from coaching, and they are happy that their company will invest in their development.

Head Start in Teaching Managers to Lead Financial Times (07/20/09) Bradshaw, Delia

Many business schools wonder how to teach leadership. The University of Texas at Dallas is setting out to answer that question by teaming up their Leadership Centre and their Center for Brain Health to create a brain physical for executives in some top companies such as Ericsson and Accor. Each manager spends two hours in a windowless room, face-to-face with a researcher. Tests include whether a leader can "zoom in and zoom out." "Leaders need to be able to gather information quickly and then summarize

it in a coherent format," says Jerry Hoag, associate dean for executive education at UT Dallas. Executives also need to be able to block things out. One test involved a manager listening to a man and a woman. The manager has to remember everything one person said, blocking out one voice. Creativity tests were also provided. When the tests are done, their results are plotted against the results of the test population, and if there are weak areas, they are given activities to help them improve. "Leadership is all about behavior, and you can't change behavior with a two or three-day intervention," says Hoag.

Bridging the Generational Gap at Work Calgary Herald (07/19/09) Shapira, Ian

Anne Loehr, a generation X business coach, teaches a seminar called "Get Wise With Gen Ys: How to Effectively Sell to Each Generation in Today's Workplace." The workshop focuses on people born in the late 1970s or early 1980s, a generation that is confusing to its elders. Loehr explains that this is the first time in American history when four generations are working together, which has resulted in problems with communication. Generation Y has grown up with reality television, so they tend to talk like the people they see on television. Older workers do not understand why they communicate that way, and feel stumped. Some boomers feel that they need to critique the younger generation. One woman claims that Generation Ys think that fame and fortune come easily and that they do not understand hard work. Loehr calms down her class and says, "It's not good or bad. It's just what they grew up with." Loehr spells out her theories on what distinguishes this generation from the previous one. "They saw 9/11," she says. "Connection is vital; they want to be connected all the time. People say, 'Why are they on Facebook all the time? Why are they texting?' They really want balance, too. They saw their parents go crazy in generation X. They are not having that lifestyle. They are going to do it their way. They're going to go to yoga at 4, and the Red Sox game at 7, and do their work at midnight. It might be a good idea to let them go to yoga at 4!"

Companies Gain With Teleworking Detroit Free Press (MI) (07/14/09) Montemurri, Patricia

Alison Gleeson, vice president of commercial sales for Cisco Systems, has successfully incorporated teleworking into her daily routine. Gleeson oversees over 1,000 employees from her California home and affirms that employees can now be part of a "corporation globally" through innovative technologies. About 80 percent of Cisco employees credit teleworking with a higher quality of life; Cisco notes that employee productivity increased by an estimated worth of \$227 million. A survey of about 2,000 Cisco employees reported that working from home actually saved the corporation millions of dollars and fostered greater satisfaction from employees. Gartner Dataquest also found that as of 2007, 12 million people telework. On a federal level, teleworking increases retention rate and reduces overall energy and building costs. Employers say that teleworking is a critical part of recruiting as younger people will want to have a teleworking option.

Omaha Jobs Program Attracting the National Limelight Omaha World-Herald (NE) (07/10/09) Jordon, Steve

Omaha, Neb., has a unique job training program in that the local business community is leading the way. The Omaha Workforce Funding Collaborative is part of a project of the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce. The collaborative has trained 24 participants for customer service jobs with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska and Mutual of Omaha. The program also is training seven people to work as assistants in ophthalmology clinics, and will start training 12 people for welding jobs in September. The goal is to help prepare chronically unemployed or under-employed people for careers that will enable them to support families. Local companies continue to express interest in the program, and there are plans to offer at least four more jobs classes in the coming year and add more each year, says the chamber's Wendy Boyer. Businesses pay some of the cost of the program, but money also comes from the federal Workforce Development Act, the State Department of Economic Development, Omaha chamber's economic development fund, local foundations, and the United Way of the Midlands. Bonnie Beresford with Capital Analytics, which is helping to evaluate the performance of the program, believes it could serve as a model for other cities that want to get local employers more involved in job training.

Is Telework a Fit for Your Business?
Small Business Computing (06/15/09) Blackwell, Gerry

Teleworking can benefit many small businesses, however companies should consider the ability of this model to align with the logistics of their business. An overwhelming number of employees currently telework, with teleworking product manufacturer Avaya forecasting that about 70 percent of SMBs would consider this work environment for their companies if they could test the platform first. Employees surveyed said that they would be willing to take a 5 percent cut in pay for the ability to work remotely, while Avaya reported that a majority of SMBs believe teleworking would make employees more productive. According to Chuck Wilsker of The Telework Coalition, businesses could save as much as \$20,000 annually per employee by implementing teleworking. TelCoa also cites reduced office space expenses, saved commuting time, and a lower rate of employees' resignation as teleworking advantages. While concerns such as security risks and the ability of employee to adopt to a teleworking environment are valid, Wilsker says that employers should establish parameters for driving employee productivity and for monitoring their output. Furthermore, he advises security measures like VPNs and encryption to safeguard vulnerabilities associated with teleworking employees.

Rebuilding Business
Conference Board Review (06/09) Vol. 46, No. 3, P. 68; Maitland, Alison

Prior to the recession, evidence was building that organizations with more women in leadership have stronger fiscal performance on average than those with few or none. However, the economic downturn has emphasized other elements of gender equality, including the trend that women are more cautious and take on a long-term perspective more often than men. Male managers, colleagues, associates, and others also play a vital role in promoting women to leadership positions. In order for women to live up to their abilities at work, men need to adapt at the office and share responsibilities at home. Companies that emphasize sexual diversity can grow and thrive, especially when encouraging innovation and enhancing product design and advertising. A recent study by Saatchi & Saatchi, an advertising company, found that British consumer-electronics retailers lost out on 600 million pounds in a single year by neglecting to reach out to female buyers. Business should think about how to oversee the "multi-generational" workforce, as older workers postpone retirement and three or four generations work side-by-side in increasingly homogeneous organizations.

Building Up Job Training
Inside Higher Ed (06/19/09) Moltz, David

During a recent meeting of the Democratic Leadership Council, White House chief of staff Rahm Emanuel said that it is President Obama's goal to get roughly 28 million students through the nation's community college system during the next 10 years. Emanuel said the president's plan would focus on the role of community colleges in job training and vocational education as well as rewriting legislation dealing with those roles so that the president's objectives are emphasized. Association of Community College Trustees president J. Noah Brown says the legislation that will likely have to be rewritten is the Workforce Investment Act, a federal program that pays for job training initiatives. Brown notes that the changes to the legislation will likely come when the law is reauthorized, which is expected to happen soon. Community college advocates say the Obama administration can make a number of different changes to the Workforce Investment Act in order to achieve its goals. For instance, the legislation could move away from using a voucher-based system to provide money to individual workers for retraining. David Baime of American Association of Community Colleges says the legislation should be changed to create local workforce reinvestment boards that make contracts directly with training providers such as community colleges. Such a system would result in more opportunities and better support for community colleges, he says.

Report Finds New Hires Poorly Prepared for Workforce Reliable Plant (07/20/09)

Employers report that they hire a large number of new workers who are ill-prepared for their jobs, requiring additional company investment to train the employees. The American Society for Training and Development, The Conference Board, Corporate Voices for Working Families, and the Society for Human Resource Management surveyed 217 employers to examine corporate practices on training newly hired graduates. The survey results raise the question whether compensating for poorly prepared new workforce entrants with on-the-job workforce readiness training is the most effective way to address the readiness gap. Approximately 50 percent of the organizations surveyed use workforce readiness training programs, but the majority of them feel that the system is "moderately" or "somewhat successful", at best. Additionally, the companies do not know how much they spend on these programs and often the programs do not match the company's needs. This is especially true for applied skills, such as critical thinking and problem solving, since 40 percent of companies need those programs and are not offering them. There are also gaps in programs that encourage creativity, reading comprehension, writing and math. However, there are some examples that are successful, such as programs at Bank of America, CVS, Harper Industries, Northrop-Grumman, and YUM! Brands. In addition, American Express is cited as an example of a major corporate employer that does not provide workforce readiness training but has instead taken an alternate route to ensure its new entrants are ready to work.

Tough Job Market Yields Strong College Recruits American Banker (07/13/09) Vol. 174, No. 132, P. 12; Monks, Matthew

Banks that have college recruiting programs say this year's graduates could be their "most likely to succeed." This is because the competitive job market is producing a high number of qualified prospects. Companies like BB&T, MB Financial, and M&T Bank are seeing an increased interest in their apprentice programs for recent college graduates. "We are ecstatic with the two classes we brought in this year--extremely high quality," says Will Sutton, executive vice president and head of employee training at BB&T. "This program is immensely important to BB&T. It has produced all but one of our executive team members." Sutton as well as his counterparts at M&T and MB say they will remain committed to acquiring new talent in spite of banks' reduced profits amid the recession. The graduates of these banks' mentoring programs, which last roughly one to two years, tend to stay longer compared to other hires and also rise through the ranks. Although the length and content of programs vary, they all aim to provide hands-on guidance in areas like retail, operations, banking, and commercial lending in hopes of preparing future leaders.

Layoff Fears Breeding Corporate Darwinism in the Workplace National Post (CAN) (07/13/09) Proudfoot, Shannon

Stress over possible layoffs, "survivor's guilt" for those who are not fired, and a strong need to appear to be indispensable is increasing, resulting in corporate Darwinism in all sectors and levels of companies. "When times get rough, people get tougher on one another. They start acting more as individuals looking out for their own skins," says Heather MacKenzie, president of The Integrity Group. "I use the analogy of Survivor all the time: it's outwit, outplay, outlast." MacKenzie continued by saying that people are treating each other with less kindness and there is less forgiveness in the workplace. Corporate training specialists have seen people fight over everything from people working too closely together, to bad hygiene, to which door should be entered to walk into the office. Even during good times within a business, people can switch to a "fight or flight" mentality, but because of the recession, the stakes are higher because of the fear over job security. MacKenzie feels that people are not getting meaner, but that people do not have the time or the emotional capability to uphold workplace relationships. "In a culture of uncertainty and fear and anxiety, you become very insular and defensive," says Nabil Oudeh, president of the Centre for Conflict Resolution International in Ottawa.

Don't Stifle Employee Creativity: Brainstorm to Generate Novel Ideas
Vancouver Sun (Canada) (07/11/09) Newman, Jennifer; Grigg, Darryl

Brainstorming can be a useful activity when pressing problems occur. It is helpful to start with a well-defined problem that deals with a specific need or service requirement. Following that, brainstorming is good for people who want to develop creative solutions to business issues. However, it should be kept in mind that brainstorming is a structured task and not a free-for-all. According to Tom Kelley, author of *The Art of Innovation: Lessons in Creativity*, successful brainstorming occurs in groups of three to ten people. Additionally, it needs to be ensured that people are heard and critiques of ideas are not spoken. Creative, unique ideas should be encouraged. In order to encourage participation, ideas should be numbered as they are generated. A recorder who is not the facilitator can write down ideas on white boards or paper taped to walls. Displaying the ideas and passing them out to the brainstormers can be helpful when choosing solutions to the issue. Just as brainstorming can be a fun, effective way to generate solutions to problems, there are also ways to reduce creativity and innovation. The first thing to do to stifle creativity is to let the CEO speak first. Employees will only try to emulate what the boss says, so it is best to sometimes leave the CEO out of brainstorming sessions. It is also important to have people with a variety of backgrounds. Inviting only experts in the field could decrease the number of ideas developed during the session. Remember to tell employees that the brainstorming session does not have to result in a practical solution, and to remain calm and easy-going in order to receive the most innovative ideas.

Students Test Corporate Waters in Class
Spartanburg Herald Journal (07/13/09) Glancy, Gary

Wofford College has developed an Institute for Professional Development. The program goes for one month during the summer, costs \$2,900, and allows students to act as consultants to various businesses in and around Spartanburg, South Carolina. There are three groups of young adults. One is working for Banc Capital & Financial Services, another is working with the Spartanburg Area Chamber of Commerce on their communications plan, and the last group is helping to develop a business plan for Saebo, a rehabilitation products provider for stroke victims. The consulting projects are one part of the Institute, but they exemplify the benefits of the whole program. "Planning a meeting, how to dress, how to shake hands, how you set a meeting agenda for something like this--that's not typically what you (learn) as a student, and it's definitely not what you get when you're a first-year employee," says program director Scott Cochran. "It takes months, if not years, to figure out all the nuances of a job. If you can get a leg up on that, it takes 18 to 24 months off the learning curve, and if you can take 18 to 24 months off the learning curve, your opportunities in any organization or graduate or medical school are exponentially better." The program also helps local businesses. The Chamber of Commerce is happy to have a new perspective on their business strategies and it allows them to perform more tasks than their current staff can handle. The group will work to figure out how the chamber can communicate better with its members, gain feedback, and develop strategies on the chamber's Web site, social networking sites, and e-newsletters. The situations are real and the groups will either solve the problem and the strategy will be implemented, or it will not be used, giving the groups real work experience.

Police Offer Employee Training in Case of an Armed Robbery
Albuquerque Journal (07/09/09) Heinz, Hailey

Employees of restaurant chain Garcia's Kitchen in Albuquerque, New Mexico learned basic guidelines regarding what to do if their business is robbed. The lessons took place at the Albuquerque Police Department Southwest Substation. Garcia's owner, Dan Garcia, asked for the classes after a nearby Denny's was robbed in June. Garcia's workers participated in similar sessions a year-and-a-half ago, but the Denny's robbery prompted Garcia to request a refresher class. "I wanted them to know how serious this is," says Garcia. "I don't want anyone to try to be a hero." Not being a hero was emphasized during the training, because the worst thing an employee can do is put themselves at additional risk. Staying safe involves not chasing after a suspect, arguing with them, or putting up a fight. Workers should also focus on remembering as many details as possible and be aware of their surroundings. They can also call 242-COPS if they suspect suspicious behavior. Several businesses in the area requested the training,

and if a business asks for assistance, police officers will visit each restaurant location and provide training specific to the business's needs.

When Careers Need Reinvention Christian Science Monitor (07/07/09) Khadaroo, Stacy Teicher

Workforce development officials, industry groups, and educational institutions such as community colleges are increasingly working together to help train individuals for new careers. One such partnership in Cape Cod, Mass., was launched by several educational institutions, renewable energy industry groups, and workforce development officials to help workers train to fill green jobs. Among the participants in the program was former school bus driver Steve Burke, who took courses on energy efficiency and renewable energies at Cape Cod Community College and is now working for RISE Engineering performing energy audits. Other industries, including the nuclear power sector, are forming similar partnerships. The Nuclear Energy Institute's Carol Berrigan says such partnerships are necessary in order to prepare workers for the thousands of new job openings that will be created in the nuclear power sector during the next several years as the result of the coming wave of retirements and the planned construction of several nuclear power plants. Thanks to those partnerships, there are now almost 50 nuclear programs at community colleges across the country, up from just a handful several years ago, Berrigan says. Meanwhile, large scale job retraining efforts began more than 10 years ago in North Carolina in response to the loss of textile and furniture manufacturing jobs. The state has become a major biosciences hub, and the North Carolina Community College System (NCCS) has played a key role in collaborating with businesses and universities to re-train the workforce.

Veterans to Be Trained for Green Jobs Under U.S. Program Los Angeles Times (07/02/09) El Madany, Sherine

Seventeen organizations nationwide will receive a total of \$7.5 million in grants to train roughly 3,000 veterans for green jobs. The grants will be awarded through the U.S. Labor Department's Veterans' Workforce Investment Program, which promotes job counseling, placement assistance, classroom training, on-the-job training, and skills upgrades for veterans. Grant recipients include the Long Beach chapter of the United States Veterans Initiative, which will get a \$500,000 grant, and Swords to Plowshares, which will receive \$300,000. Grants also have been awarded to groups in Texas, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Colorado, Indiana, and Arizona. Veterans taking part will be trained for such jobs as residential and commercial solar energy system installation, solar water heater repair, solar energy roofing, electrical installation and maintenance, and solid and wastewater treatment. California's Employment Development Department reports that the unemployment rate for veterans in the state was 7 percent in May, compared to 4.5 percent a year ago. "Our goal is to work with 133 veterans, and [we] hope to provide employment placement to 75 percent, or about 100 veterans," says Greg McCormack, Long Beach director of the U.S. Veterans Initiative. He notes that the market demand for green jobs is on the rise, especially as businesses focus more on going green.

Social Media an Increasingly Important Employee Engagement Tool SmartPros Accounting (06/09/09)

According to research from the International Association of Business Communicators Research Foundation and Buck Consultants, businesses are seriously assessing their usage of social media. The "Employee Engagement Survey" assessed communications between businesses and their employees. The survey found that 21 percent of businesses use Twitter, while 18 percent use Facebook and more firms reporting their intended use in the future. Yet 46 percent of respondents say that they are not assessing the efficacy of social media. Over half of the firms responded that their communication staff was reduced due to the economy. Seventy-nine percent said that social media was used more frequently than email to provide more engaging communications with employees, with blogs being the top social communications platform. According to Buck Consultants' director in communications Robin McCasland, "Our results represent opportunities for communicators to have greater influence in delivering messages

that encourage employees to remain productive, and to understand how their work contributes toward achieving business priorities.”

Chart Your Own Path: Unlock the Potential of a Career Map
Forum (06/09) Vol. 93, No. 6, P. 32; Harrigan, Nurys

A career map can provide guidance to professionals looking to find a rewarding, successful career. Creating and constantly revisiting a career map can help both recent graduates and seasoned professionals navigate the many hurdles that workers experience throughout their lives, particularly during difficult economic times. A career map should address three questions: "Where have I been?" and "Where am I now?" and "Where am I going?" Finding the answers to these questions requires an honest inventory of your skills, which establishes the foundation for the entire map. After completing the inventory, start dreaming about where you would like to be in two, five, and 10 years. Determine where your interests really are and what you want to do. Be creative and original as it is alright if your goal is something that has never been accomplished or is unrelated to your history. Once you know your final objective, it is time to assess the gap between where you are and where you want to be, including what new skills will help you achieve your goal, which may mean taking on new responsibilities at your current position, finding new professional opportunities, or volunteering in a role that helps you develop the skills you need. Once you have created your map and started down the path toward your final objective, be sure to revisit the map every two years or so to make sure you are still passionate about your choices, that you are continuing to develop new skills, and that you are working within the best possible industry to obtain those skills.

Job Retraining May Fall Short of High Hopes
New York Times (07/06/09) Luo, Michael

Tens of thousands of workers have looked to retraining as a way to find new employment after being laid off. Despite the popularity of the government-financed programs, there are concerns about whether they actually work. The highest unemployment rate is in Michigan at 14.1 percent and 78,000 people are enrolled in the No Worker Left Behind program with another 7,800 are on the waiting list. A study recently conducted by the Labor Department found that the benefits of the biggest federal job training program were “small or nonexistent” for laid-off workers. It showed little difference in earnings and the chances of being rehired between laid-off people who had been retrained and those who had not. Among the reasons that retraining might not be effective, according to the study, is the fact that many workers who have lost their jobs are older and had spent their lives working in one industry. In need of a job right away, many pick relatively short training programs, which often have marginal benefits. Economists also point out that job retraining is ineffective without job creation. Finally, workers cannot predict the future of a job market, especially during the recession. “I can’t tell you with any degree of certainty, and I’ve been doing it for 20 years, what the hot jobs are going to be,” says one of the authors, Kenneth Troske, an economics professor at the University of Kentucky. Andy Levin, deputy director of the Michigan Labor and Economic Growth Department, notes that the state’s economic woes make it hard to judge its retraining efforts. But Levin says he believed the state’s focus on longer-term training for occupations showing growth would bear fruit. “My position is this: Unless you have a highly educated work force, you really don’t have much of a chance,” he says.

The Art of Teaming to Win in Recessions
Investor's Business Daily (07/06/09) Stern, Gary M.

During economic downturns, managers need to create strategies to motivate employees. Their typical techniques do not work and could lead to a decrease in productivity. Bain & Co. analyzed 2,500 companies during the 2001 recession and found that 24 percent of companies moved from the bottom to the top, while 20 percent fell. The successful firms had clear strategies, managed cash flow, improved sales and pricing decisions, and had enough money to make acquisitions or partnerships. However, no one management style results in success. Controlling styles work at some organizations while a more easy-going approach works at others. The key to managing employees during crises is to take care of

people's basic needs. Once workers know their jobs are secure, they are able to focus on customers instead of their own situations. Managers can work more effectively by continuing to take risks, increasing communication, upgrading their talent, and only making cuts that do not affect customer service. CEOs and executives can also take advantage of more free time by talking with customers more often. Managers should manage their stress instead of letting it hurt them and the company.

Create a Workplace That Permits Employees to Be Themselves Prince George Citizen (07/04/09)

Within most organizations there is an expectation of conformity amongst employees. Most workers are expected to be on time and follow the system of hierarchy. However, there are times when a worker's personal values clash with the organization's on religious, cultural, or in other ways. Many companies look at values such as integrity, responsibility and efficient service when creating their mission and values statements, but employees may not learn of the values until after they are hired. This can result in workers hiding or changing themselves in order to fit in with the company. A typical solution would be to tell the worker to move to a different company, but this is difficult because of the current economic situation. There are ways to prevent inauthentic behavior at work and to avoid the cost of high turnover. Creating a receptive environment is important. Companies that promote diversity are less likely to have to deal with conformity. Staff participation should also be encouraged. This will allow employees to make decisions and make it seem less likely that they are going through their daily routines in order to keep their jobs. Collectivists should be properly handled so that they do not bully or use other tactics to get other workers to conform. Finally, self-monitors who change themselves to fit in with the larger group will be able to cooperate and socialize with others if the company embraces diversity.

Building Up Job Training Inside Higher Ed (06/19/09) Moltz, David

Community colleges are ecstatic that President Obama plans to provide funding for their job training programs. The Obama administration plans to help 5 million more students through community college within the next decade than is currently predicted. There are currently 11.5 million students in the system, and many think that figure will double within the next 10 years. The plan will focus on job training and vocational education and legislation related to these aspects would need rewriting. J. Noah Brown of the Association of Community College Trustees thinks that President Obama will change the Workforce Investment Act which funds job training initiatives. David Baime of the American Association of Community Colleges would like to see the act shift from a voucher-based system which provides money to workers on a restricted level for retraining to one that allows workforce investment boards to make contracts with training providers such as community colleges. "While shifting these models would likely result in more opportunities and better support for community colleges as leading workforce training providers, additional statutory language prioritizing the use of community colleges for training would help to ensure a national-level of integration of these institutions into the workforce development system," Baime wrote in an e-mail describing some of his organization's ideas. Baime would also like to see a reformed version of the program for Community-Based Job Training Grants.

FAQ: How Does the Six Sigma Methodology Benefit IT? TechTarget (06/25/09) Guglielmo, Karen

The Six Sigma methodology has been used in manufacturing for some time and is starting to be used more frequently in IT as the field becomes increasingly process and service driven. Six Sigma focuses on people and processes, and can help CIOs shift from an internal focus to a wider external view of how the IT architecture affects end users. Organizations can use Six Sigma to improve quality and reduce the cost of IT operations by identifying and eliminating defects, connect measurement systems to strategic objectives, and help organizations focus on initiatives that will provide the most value to customers. Implementing Six Sigma does come with some costs, such as training staff and giving them Six Sigma certifications, or hiring an outside consultant with experience using the tools and processes, but those costs must be compared against the cost of doing something wrong. Available Six Sigma software tools

include statistical and process analysis, program management, and project collaboration tools. There are four levels of Six Sigma certification and training. Green Belt is the first level and is intended for business or IT professionals involved in small-scale projects that could produce about \$10,000 in savings. Black Belt certification involves additional training in designing experiments and scientific methods and recipients can work in any Six Sigma situation, including mentoring a Green Belt. The last two, Master and Champion, are awarded to people who have mastered all aspects of Six Sigma.

Talent Is Everything

Conference Board Review (06/09) Vol. 46, No. 3, P. 24; Hagel, John; Brown, John Seely; Davison, Lang

Many organizations--and nations, and even municipalities--strive toward the appropriate goal of hiring and retaining good workers. "Attract and retain" is the phrase uniting most of the current boardroom talent discussions: How do we locate and hire the best people? What should our recruitment strategy look like, and how can we more efficiently oversee the candidate pipeline? If the best employees are likely to leave, what can the organization do to change their minds? C-suite leaders may even find themselves asking the most basic question of all: What business is this company really in? To answer this, first begin with operations. In the last 100 years, large Western businesses centered their business operations around the idea of "pushing" resources into the regions of highest anticipated demand. Push programs have been behind workable, cost-efficient initiatives. But they have also exacted a steep price: the stringent specification of activities and actions they demand. Rather than attempting to foresee demand and standardize operations in order to mitigate surprises, companies can establish less rigid "pull" platforms to join participants with resources wherever and whenever they are required. Pull platforms are integral to enabling on-the-job learning, since they facilitate access to different resources in innovative ways and thus encourage participants to attempt new strategies. To fully experience the possibilities for employee development in comprehensive, intra-enterprise talent databases, the talent-driven company will have to roll out even bolder pull platforms that accommodate a large number of companies.

A Matter of Transparency

T+D (06/09) Wolfe, George A.; Talaga, Jean A.; Bernard, Laurent

Companies are mixing various strategies to facilitate transparency in human capital management, and workplace environment manufacturer Steelcase understands that customer service as well as internal operations can benefit from a comprehension of human capital transparency. "The point is for the organization to be authentic and align the level of disclosure with what the organization can support," says Steelcase CEO Jim Hackett. Last year, transparency in talent management cropped up in several ASTD Benchmarking Forum venues, beginning with a member-to-member poll produced by Steelcase. The benchmark survey on talent management transparency concentrated on a formalized talent review or succession management process as well as a specific high-potential accelerated development initiative. The survey asked companies whether programs were installed and whether information about the processes or people involved was communicated throughout the organization. The strategy with the most openness could be characterized as one that notifies employees whenever individuals are chosen for succession or when a position has been identified as an essential role for the company. Organizations with transparent talent processes have a very friendly corporate culture and report a high degree of employee motivation when talent management information is exchanged. However, Steelcase research indicated that transparency in certain corporate environments can breed disengagement and demotivation as workers learn that they have not been recognized as high potentials or future successors or that their current role lacks strategic corporate value. Steelcase discovered that most corporations have no single perspective about talent transparency, which tends to foster a "do nothing" approach. Steelcase guaranteed the availability of equal development and growth opportunities to all employees before formalizing a transparency perspective, and the company reached the conclusion that greater transparency regarding talent management processes impacts employee retention and trust. Steelcase has determined that the business rationale underlying the succession planning process must be communicated to all employees, which signals that the company possesses a scientifically based, legally sound succession planning process implemented to ensure strong, future leader fitness.

Pass It On

Human Resource Executive (06/09) Vol. 23, No. 8, P. 30; Shelly, Jared

Northrop Grumman's BQM-74E aerial target is a highly sophisticated piece of machinery that can fly as high as 40,000 feet or cruise as low as seven feet at speeds of up to 592 miles per hour. To build such a complex machine, the company's Aerospace Systems division in California, which is manned by more than 20 percent of the company's 120,000-member workforce, depended upon the skills and knowledge of a 10-member manufacturing team, which initially began work on the vessel more than three decades ago. Many of these team members have been with Northrop since the project's inception, and over time the team has become more skilled and efficient in its procedures. Four years ago, however, only half of the production-line mechanics still remained, which posed the possibility that a great deal of expert information would be lost. Scott Shaffar, Northrop's director for knowledge management, had an idea: Record the entire building process on video, including in-depth interviews with the retiring experts. Before the replacement hires started assembling real targets, they viewed the videos, which remain online permanently for their own use. The initiative is administered by the knowledge-management department, but funded by HR. About 50 percent of the front-line assemblers are new hires, says Steve Mastin, director of Northrop's target programs. "They were trained using that method and we've had very, very little scrap and rework. We've had excellent efficiencies and we haven't missed any schedules."

Pendulum Is Swinging Back on 'Scenario Planning'

Wall Street Journal (07/06/09) P. B6; Tuna, Cari

Executives at JDS Uniphase Corp. spend each spring planning for three potential sales scenarios for the coming fiscal year, which begins in July. In the spring of 2008 they included an extremely pessimistic sales outlook and outlined potential cost cuts, a move that proved useful when the economy contracted and customers began delaying orders later in the year. "We knew what levers to go pull," says Dave Vellequette, chief financial officer at the Milpitas, Calif., maker of fiber-optic telecommunications equipment. The experience highlights the value of scenario planning, or preparing responses to imagined changes in conditions. "It's not about predicting the future," says Peter Schwartz, a partner at the consulting firm Monitor Group. "Scenario planning is a tool for learning" and making better decisions. The practice gained popularity at firms such as General Electric Co. and Royal Dutch Shell PLC in the 1970s, says Schwartz, who led scenario planning at Shell in the early 1980s. Scenario planning helped Shell weather the oil supply disruptions and price shocks of the 1970s better than competitors, according to Schwartz, and also prompted the New York Board of Trade to build a second trading floor outside the World Trade Center in the 1990s, enabling the futures exchange to continue operating after the September 11 attacks. The 2001 attacks led to an increase in the use of scenario planning, according to surveys by consultants Bain & Co. However, recent surveys found fewer executives using the tool, though the recession is expected to once again highlight the procedure's importance.

How to Manage Virtual Teams

MIT Sloan Management Review (Quarter3, 2009) Vol. 50, No. 4, P. 63; Siebdrat, Frank; Hoegl, Martin; Ernst, Holger

Several studies have found that collaboration across distance is more difficult than in a colocated environment. Potential issues include difficulties in communication and coordination, reduced trust, and an increased inability to establish a common ground. But dispersion could have substantial advantages, if managed correctly. Larger companies tend to cluster their competencies in different centers of excellence, and managers can take advantage of this organizational structure by assembling employees from the different locations into cohesive networks to create a team that can optimally integrate the different pools of expertise to perform a particular task. Also, companies can take advantage of the increased diversity inherent in dispersed collaboration. Diversity can be highly valuable for teams by exposing members to different sources of work experience, feedback, and networking opportunities as well as by bringing more vantage points to bear on a particular project. When managing virtual teams, managers need to pay special attention to task-related processes that will capitalize on the specialized knowledge and expertise of the group. Team work skills should be emphasized and self-leadership

across the team should be promoted. Managers should also provide periodic face-to-face meetings and foster a global culture.

Old Workers Continue to Learn ScienceAlert (Australia) (06/30/09)

A new Queensland University of Technology (QUT) study found that older workers are as willing and able to learn as their younger colleagues, though their opportunity to do so is sometimes stymied by negative age stereotypes. "The stereotype that older workers are not willing or able to learn was not found to be true," says Megan Tones, from QUT's Faculty of Education. "All workers', not just older workers', engagement in their learning and development at work is influenced by their perceptions of learning and development opportunities. She notes "age had no impact on willingness to engage with learning and development. Rather, I found age-related perceptions of workplace attitudes towards learning and development opportunities were the guiding factor." Tones says organizations that advertise training opportunities only to younger people "may send a negative message to older workers that their knowledge and skills are not valued or worth developing." She says the second factor influencing workers' beliefs about opportunities for learning and development is the complexity of their work in terms of the decision-making required and its status with regard to education qualifications. "I found that professionals and managers ... reported that age didn't matter in terms of their being offered opportunities for learning and development - they seem to be offered them continuously throughout their careers. Complex work has the added advantage of enabling workers to learn and develop just through doing their job. In addition, complex work often requires continuous learning and development to remain up-to-date." Tones concludes her research suggests that organizations should recognize age diversity as an opportunity for business and offer training to all workers.

Reconciling Short- and Long-Term Workforce Trends Harvard Business Review (06/09) Erickson, Tammy

Talent shortages are already occurring, despite the economic recession. There are approximately 3 million unfulfilled jobs in the United States, many of which require specific training. Because more jobs require special skills, it is more difficult for laid off individuals to move from one organization to another. As the economy recovers, the shortages will become more obvious. About 75 percent of jobs require some post-high school education, but education patterns have not kept up with that trend. In addition to talent shortages, there is the growing trend that birth rates are falling. Businesses are used to a steady stream of young employees, but this will no longer be the case. Both these trends mean that the supply/demand balance will shift toward the person looking for work, especially if that person is skilled, educated, and experienced. Work arrangements will become more varied as well. Companies will need to offer new ways of working because younger generations are more interested in self-reliance and immediate challenge, so their bond to their organizations is looser. Finally, the recession has led to companies introducing individuals to new ways of working by removing the dependency on one work relationship.

Diversity Policy Worth Copying Financial Times (06/25/09) Brewster, Deborah

Ursula Burns will be the first African American woman to lead a Fortune 500 company when she assumes the role at Xerox on July 1. This will be an important milestone; however, it also shows how few managerial positions African Americans hold in U.S. corporations. This is especially true for African American women. Even though they have been graduating from college at higher rates, they still only hold 1 percent of corporate management jobs. Burns was recognized as senior executive material early on and joined a company committed to diversity. A third of their management is female and a fifth are members of minority groups. Xerox's commitment shows that they are enabling talented African Americans and other minorities to move ahead. African Americans represent 13 percent of the population in the United States, but hold less than 7 percent of managerial positions. Their representation on boards and management of large companies has also fallen since 2000. These trends have occurred despite the

fact that there are numerous corporate programs aimed at increasing diversity and a general view in the business community that diversity at the top is important. Many feel that the election of President Obama represents a shift. "There has already been a change. People are talking about diversity more . . . I am starting to feel and sense that things are moving. There is more conversation than ever before, and the conversation is less uncomfortable," says John Rogers, founder of Ariel. However, companies should be more aware of their hiring processes and make sure their management is diverse. Too often companies will look to friends when hiring, and not truly look around for worthy hires.

5 Ways to Improve Your Leadership Abilities Through Communication Manage Smarter (06/11/09) Alexander, Shari

People's leadership abilities often depend on how effective they are at communicating and motivating team members. A recent Harvard Business Publishing report of the most common leadership shortcomings listed five ways to improve leadership skills through communication. First, stay energized and enthusiastic. If managers are not excited about what they are saying and supporting, no one else will be either. When dealing with less-than-thrilling issues, managers need to trick themselves into being enthusiastic. Second, have a clear vision and direction. Workers are ready to follow leaders, but they need to see them moving toward an established objective. Leaders must demonstrate how completing specific objectives will improve situations for their worker, such as strengthening the company. Third, management needs to be willing to collaborate with other divisions and their employees. Improve collaborative efforts by opening up new communication channels and clearly defining the desired effect, develop and agree on processes and responsibilities, and ask for feedback throughout the process. Fourth, be open to new ideas and suggestions. Leading and motivating is not about dictating and assigning tasks. The experience team members gain from their daily work can lead to excellent suggestions that can vastly improve operations or product quality. Finally, develop interpersonal skills. If leaders are seen as a grump or overbearing, team members will avoid them, while welcoming, interested, and engaging leaders generally have more successful, and happier, teams.

Leadership Managerial Failures are Still Ingrained in Corporate Culture, Experts Warn New Brunswick Business Journal (06/06/09) Shmuel, John

Many corporate HR practices have not prepared companies to deal with the current economic crisis. Mildred Royer, president of Royer Thompson, a human resources consulting firm, feels that the collapse of banks and automotive corporations in the United States should serve as an example to Atlantic Canadian companies about the pertinence of holding senior management accountable. If organizations want to succeed, they need to look at the roles of executives, and not just workers at levels below them. "It's about ensuring you do diligence in recruiting your managers and your leaders, looking at competencies and particularly the values that these people hold," says Royer. Although managers should be scrutinized to ensure that their practices are ethical and strong, the CEO is not the only person responsible for the company's operations. It should be kept in mind that employees at all levels of the organization, including stakeholders, play a role in the operation of the company. Another positive aspect of good HR policy is talent management. This aspect looks at the development, the utilization, and the retention of senior leaders and other workers in the company. "Atlantic Canadian companies are going to have to hire individuals with them who have a much greater sense of regulation, much more focused on risk assessment and risk tolerance in their organization, and much more appreciation of accountability frameworks," says Royer.

Managing Generation Y: Why the Challenge Is Worth It Association News (06/09) Vol. 33, No. 6, P. 38; Pearson, Daniel

For some people, the millennial or Generation Y workforce is characterized by moodiness and disengagement, but these workers could be spurred to achieve more if leaders gain a better understanding of their underlying interests and motivations. Millennial employees are technologically savvy, having come of age at a time when most homes had high-speed Internet connectivity, video games and online social networking were very popular activities, and cell phones were affordable for

adolescents with part-time employment. About.com blogger Sally Kane notes that 18-year-old millennials were expected to enroll at competitive colleges, use handsets and laptops on the job, and spend between 40 and 60 hours a week at work. A recent Mercer report identifies baby boomers and Generation Xers' failure to adjust to changes in the workforce driven by the millennials as a serious challenge for Generation Y leaders, but author Johnny Taylor says Generation Y shares with other generations the desire to be heard, respected, and appreciated. Consultant Yoon Cannon advises that leaders should arrange one-on-one sessions with staffers to find out their individual motivations, and develop action plans with them to help them achieve their short-term, mid-term, and long-term goals at work. Observers say that younger workers do not value long-term employment because of the tumultuous economic climate, and consultant Laurent Duperval suggests that leaders should stress that the skills and training the younger workers are getting will help them in their next job. Teamwork also should be emphasized as a priority among young staffers, and business psychologist Debra Condren says that managers can tell new staffers, "If you're unwilling to roll up your sleeves and be a part of the team, you're going to sabotage yourself and your ambitions."

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