

A Newsletter From Edwards Consulting Firm, Inc. Helping Business Leaders Manage Their Careers and Their Resources

Welcome to our Summer Edition!

“The quality of an organization can never exceed the quality of the minds that make it up.”

– Harold R. McAlindon



Every business leader agrees that a company's strength is directly linked to the quality of its people. When all is said and done, people run companies. No matter how the market is doing, no business can successfully compete without the right people in place. At Edwards Consulting Firm, Inc., we truly believe that a company's talent is the most important differentiator in its

quest for higher productivity and profits.

That said, without a hiring strategy to acquire the right talent, a management program to keep the right people in the right roles, and a working environment that is conducive to change—allowing people to learn and grow—the company's successes may not be consistent enough to sustain its continued business growth. This quarter's newsletter on talent acquisition and management tackles these realities.

This issue's One-on-One features Stephen Smith, Director of Staffing and Succession Planning at AGL Resources. Stephen shares some insights from his career in human capital management as well as some tips on improving your organization's efforts on this front. Next, Rochelle Turoff Mucha, a Registered Organization Development Consultant guides your talent management strategy with the right questions. Finally, Nancy Gerber, a Professional Certified Coach, outlines stages of the learning process that enable new talent or those promoted to a new role to further their development.

Conscious Communication is dedicated to providing valuable human capital management strategies and career tips to our clients, career seekers, and professional networks on a quarterly basis. You are invited to share this newsletter with your colleagues and friends. You are also invited to visit www.edwardsconsultingfirm.com to learn how you can benefit from our executive search and contract services. And, as always, we welcome your feedback and ideas for future issues of *Conscious Communication*.

Best regards,



Damali Edwards
Founder and CEO

One-on-One

Human Capital Management Insights

Stephen Smith began his career in the human capital management field over ten years ago. Smith holds an MBA (with a human resources concentration) from Kennesaw State University. As an active member in Society of Human Resource Management, he has led workshops on hot topics for human resource professionals, and has a Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR) Certification.



In the past, Smith has worked for large, consumer-oriented businesses such as the Coca-Cola Company and Cingular Wireless, developing and implementing company-wide employee initiatives such as talent retention programs, performance evaluation processes, and employee benefits programs. Smith is currently the recently appointed Director of Staffing and Succession Planning at AGL Resources in Atlanta, Georgia.

Conscious Communication:

How did you pick the human resources discipline as a career path?

Smith:

I originally started in corporate security, performing employee investigations where I worked with human resources professionals to find resolutions to problems. As a result, I was exposed to a field in which there is an opportunity to make a significant impact on an organization. Human resources touch so many critical aspects of a company, including the actual organizational structure; the recruiting of the right people; and the structuring of jobs and their associated incentives and compensation packages. It seemed to me a way to touch many parts of a company at one time.

Conscious Communication:

What has been one of the greatest challenges you've had to face as a human resources leader?

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Smith:

Large-scale mergers and acquisitions. In marrying two very large organizations, one of the greatest challenges is managing through the reality that, regardless of how talented some people are in an organization, you will not always be able to find a place for them in the newly organized company.

Conscious Communication:

With that said, do you think that companies lose some of their best talent during mergers and/or acquisitions?

Smith:

I think some talent is lost – hopefully not the best and brightest, but it is inevitable that some good talent goes. Hopefully a good, sound process is used to review talent and to make solid decisions around placements. When a company is bought by another, or two companies decide to join one another, the process of bringing people together is not the same as assimilating other assets. I know we talk about human capital as an asset, and it is— but people don't like to be treated as an asset, they like being treated like people. You have to know and accept the difficult reality that it is unlikely that you will find a place for every employee. One of the benefits of mergers and acquisitions is the efficiencies that the businesses can achieve. Typically, this translates into fewer people and, as a result, you are going to lose people—including some good ones.

Conscious Communication:

How do you ensure that you have the right people in the right jobs?

Smith:

It takes great diligence. Among the many initiatives involved in making that happen is creating an organizational environment that values its people and embraces leaders who value coaching, giving people feedback, and allowing people to grow. This environment also has a tolerance for people who make mistakes along the way and allows people to explore what they want to do and how they want to do it.

Conscious Communication:

How does an organization show that it values its employees?

Smith:

By keeping employees engaged. Management has to constantly ensure that employees are being challenged. I believe that employment is a symbiotic relationship. In biology, symbiotic relationships refer to species that live together with mutual benefits for each. In companies, employees and their organization can coexist for long periods of time as long as the relationship is mutually beneficial and objectives are met and goals are achieved. However, in this context, if either one of the parties change, it is time for something different—whether that means an internal move, a different assignment or a move out of the organization.

Conscious Communication:

What do you want to know most about an applicant?

Smith:

I like to know what someone has done poorly because I'm interested in knowing what they have learned from their mistakes. Obviously, in an interview candidates come prepared to talk about their successes. Arguably, though, you learn more from failures. I'm not looking specifically for a laundry list of people's failures per se, but their ability to convey that they recovered from them with new insight.

Conscious Communication:

How do you see the human resources discipline today and in the future? What will be the focus?

Smith:

I think human resources is one of those areas in business that has to constantly reinvent itself because of the overall challenges organizations face and the speed in which they have to respond to them. Two important HR focus areas today – and for the future – are employment branding and talent acquisition. Employment branding has to do with aligning the company's overall value proposition with the value proposition for its employees. Talent acquisition is important because no matter what a company does, it needs – and will need – strong, innovative and engaged employees to make it all work. Overall, I believe human resources professionals must move from being administrators to consultants. What's more, they need to build good relationships internally to achieve these objectives.

Conscious Communication:

What do you REALLY know today?

Smith:

From a personal perspective, I know that I don't know everything. I don't ever want to feel finished with my education. I like to learn. From a talent acquisition and management perspective, I know that organizations that succeed are the ones that are brave enough to commit to creating a culture that allows the right people through the door in the first place and then are brave enough to take an interest in developing them to their full potential.

Connect Your Career

The Essential Work of Talent Management

by Rochelle Turoff Mucha



The Talent Wars.

The Nineties. Companies competing for the best and brightest.

Early 2000. The best and brightest competing to keep jobs.

Now. Companies competing to keep their best and brightest.

Talent Management builds an individual's capabilities, in turn driving business results. In the best or the worst of times, if you

can't keep your talent, your chances of weathering storms or keeping your competitive edge are compromised.

The answers to the following questions will guide your Talent Management.

Assessment:

- Where is the organization going?
- What work needs to get done?
- What are our current/future roles?
- What competencies are required to do the work?
- What competencies do we have now?
- What are our gaps?

Acquisition:

- Where does the organization find people with the needed competencies?

Development:

- How does the company stimulate new and current employees to grow their potential?

Measurement:

- How did we do?
- What was the impact on business results?

Talent Management relies on assessing *performance* and *potential*. Performance measures against objectives as well as current and past behavior and therefore, may or may not be an indicator of one's potential. Potential is about predicting what an employee may be capable of in the future and is more difficult to determine because you are inferring any future contributions based on current data.

It is an ongoing challenge to have the *right* people in the *right* jobs at the *right* time doing the *right* things. Moreover, it is a disservice to the organization and its people to keep them in roles that are not *right*. Talent Management is NOT about promotions that are based on tenure or political favors or about hiring folks that are the most personable.

The ability to effectively execute a business strategy is rooted in the ability to attract, retain, and develop key talent. In the *War for Talent*, Charles Fishman said, "All that matters is talent. Talent wins...Leaders must add value as coaches, recruiting the most talented players and enhancing the skills of their current staff. It's the only way to be ready for the future, not just next month."

No company can afford to be unprepared for both the best and worst of times.

Rochelle Turoff Mucha is President of R.J.Scott & Associates, Inc., Consulting with Integrity. Rochelle is a Registered Organization Development Consultant (RODC) (certified by the Organization Development Institute), serves as adjunct faculty for the University of Georgia Terry College of Business, and a doctoral student in the School of Human and Organization Development at Fielding Graduate University. Her focus is on strategic meeting design and facilitation, learning, change management, communication strategy, leadership, and team development. She has published dozens of articles and one book, Men and Me: Entertainment to Insight. You may contact her at: www.consulting-integrity.com.

A Balanced Life

The Four Stages of Learning

by Nancy Gerber



STAGE 1 — Unconscious incompetence — we don't know what we don't know, and are usually blissfully happy and unaware.

STAGE 2 — Conscious incompetence — we decide to move ahead or start something new. We begin to see how little we know and how far we have to go. Errors, problems, and incompetencies seem plentiful and insurmountable.

STAGE 3 — Conscious competence — we are beginning to get the hang of this, but need to be deliberate and fully aware of every action (think of how it was when you first learned to drive a car).

STAGE 4 — Mastery — things flow effortlessly; repetitive actions transition from deliberate to automatic. These new patterns are now a permanent part of our lives.

We move between these learning stages throughout our lives — even when we MASTER something; if conditions change, we often shift back to an earlier stage (for example, if we're driving and encounter bad weather or an accident).

In the early stages of learning or growing in a new direction — after a promotion, or in a new relationship, for example — many of us slam right into Stage 2. We become CONSCIOUS of our errors, inadequacies, and gaps. We start to realize all the challenges and things we need to work on and begin feeling pretty overwhelmed by it all. Suddenly, things seem to pop up that get in the way of continuing on with our process, and it's easier to fall back into the comfort of old patterns than to muster the effort to develop and implement new ones.

The moment of choice is always with us: to retreat or to push on and keep hacking at the undergrowth, even when it feels like the blade will forever remain dull.

What do you want? Are you happy with the way things are? What's standing in the way of your furthering your development?

*Nancy Gerber is a Professional Certified Coach and Founder and President of **SteppingStones**, based in Norcross, Georgia. For over 30 years, she has coached and educated thousands of people worldwide on how to improve their communication and deepen their relationships with others — and themselves. Nancy is also a Certified Teleconference Facilitator, mentor coach, internationally published writer, and popular speaker who has given presentations on three continents. She helps high achievers take as good care of themselves as they do their businesses, and specializes in working with successful, innovative, and unconventional people and organizations. Contact Nancy at www.sstones.com.*

RECOMMENDED LINKS

Author of 'Good to Great'

<http://www.jimcollins.com/>

Corporate Leadership Council

<http://www.corporateleadershipcouncil.com>

Human Capital Institute

<http://www.humancapitalinstitute.org>

Society for Human Resource Management

<http://www.shrm.org/>

Conscious Communication
A Publication of Edwards Consulting Firm, Inc.
2871-D North Decatur Road
Suite 171
Decatur, Georgia 30033-5989



Conscious Communication

Mission



To provide valuable human capital management strategies and career tips to our clients, career seekers and professional networks.

Conscious Communication is published quarterly by Edwards Consulting Firm, Inc., a corporate talent search firm that provides executive search and contract services. To learn more about us, call 404.288.8824 or visit us online at www.edwardsconsultingfirm.com.

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