

“People and Productivity: Making the Connection”

Keynote Address of  
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Thank you, and Good Morning. It’s an honor to be part of this program.

During the next forty-five minutes, I want to cover four areas I believe will have value to you as Call Center employers...

First, I want to discuss the key demographic trends that lie ahead. These trends promise dramatic changes ahead for every U.S. employer. Second, I want to share some highlights from our most recent survey of North American workers, the *Randstad North America Employee Review*. Third, I want to relate some of our key findings to specific challenges you may face as Call Center employers. And finally, I want to offer a few suggestions on how you might use this information to your own advantage.

For the benefit of those of you who don’t know much about Randstad, let me take a moment to give you a little background.

It all started forty-two years ago in a tiny section of Holland called, not coincidentally, “The Randstad.” The company’s founder, Frits Goldschmeding, was celebrating the completion of his Master’s degree in economics with friends. The discussion soon turned to his Master’s thesis.

In that thesis, he proposed what was then an innovative idea – that companies could convert their labor expenses from fixed to flexible costs by using temporary labor. A friend offered to help him test his idea. The next day, they made some flyers and headed off on bicycles to comb the Randstad in search of their first job order and a candidate to fill it.

Before the day was out, they had made their first match – placing a receptionist fluent in four languages in an assignment calling for fluency in those very languages!

In its first year of operation, the company earned a net income of 9 guilders – or about \$4.50 in US dollars. Today, Randstad is a \$6 billion dollar international provider of professional employment services, and the fourth largest staffing organization in the world. We operate more than 2,000 offices in 13 countries, including close to 500 in the U.S. and Canada.

In 2001, Randstad put more than 217,000 people to work around the world... *each and every day*.

Given that history, it's not hard to see that our perspective on business development is that it all starts with innovation – individuals with compelling ideas and the courage to try them out.

In today's digital age, innovators create economic value in ways we couldn't have imagined a few years ago.

One of my favorite examples of that is Sally Ride's former employer, NASA. Who would have imagined that space flight could jump-start such a long list of commercial innovations? It's made possible everything from a ventricular assist heart pump that was developed from space shuttle fuel pumps...to industrial medical x-ray machines...to navigation systems...and even to new golf clubs made from metals studied in the space station program that help many of us hit it a little longer and straighter.

Innovation like this drives growth, and people working productively sustain growth. Business success, then, begins and ends with *people*. We all know it, but it bears repeating – business success begins and ends with people.

How many great business ideas have been nurtured and funded, and then failed at the execution step? For that matter, how many established businesses have lost their way because they couldn't sustain the momentum of their early successes?

Businesses can't continue to grow – particularly in an economy like this one – without people who can add value.

There are many who believe, like J.W. Marriott, founder of Marriott Hotels that “recruiting and retaining people is the most pressing challenge facing American business today – that workers' minds and attitudes are as important to satisfying the customer as materials and machines used to be.”

How important are people in an electronic age? As you know only too well, technology can't replace people. It complements them.

Look at some of the new Customer Relationship Management applications. CRM enables a Fortune 100 company to act like a “mom and pop.”

Database developers for UPS, for example, are developing a CRM application that can identify when one of the millions of the company's long-standing domestic customers is using its international services for the first time. When the order is placed, a customer service rep is alerted electronically and makes a “thank you” call to the customer.

A nice touch – and a smart marriage of people and technology.

How important can people be in an electronic age?

Let me put it this way. Anticipating sustained growth, Call Centers across industries invested millions upon millions of dollars in ramping up technological capabilities in the '90s. Given the economic slump we've seen over the past couple of years, it means that many Centers are now wrestling with significant overcapacity.

The key for Centers with overcapacity is not investing in additional capacity, but in leveraging what you have – and that starts with getting maximum productivity out of your people.

As wonderful as technology is, true value in most businesses will come from employees who can create, analyze, and transform information – as well as effectively interact with customers and co-workers.

That, of course, only elevates the role Call Center employees will play in the success of their service-based employers.

And make no mistake.

American employers will bounce back. The U.S. is the world's leading provider of high-level products and services that other areas of the world are going to need to sustain their economies.

So despite the recent slowdown, the demand for American innovation will continue to grow. And that in turn, will fuel an ever-increasing demand for workers with the right hard and soft skills to make innovation pay off.

Long term, expect the job market to be strong.

Short-term, there's no question that the job market for skilled workers has tightened considerably over the past year. And it's expected to remain tight for a while.

According to a recent survey, less than half the Class of 2002 expected to find a job when they graduated. They weren't wrong.

Graduates this year have faced one of the toughest job markets we've seen in quite a while. Not only are today's graduates competing with their classmates, but they're also competing with seasoned professionals who have been laid off, stay-at-home moms and dads re-entering the job market because their spouses were laid off and retirees returning to work to make up for retirement plan losses.

Any way you look at it, it's been a tough job market.

There are a lot of people looking for work right now -- but let me assure you – things are about to change.

As I said, when we pull out of the current slowdown, we're going to be facing a sustained labor shortage – much of it due to a seismic demographic shift on the horizon. Some 75 million baby-boomers – the largest generation in the workforce today – are gearing down for retirement. Their departure is expected to drive down the unemployment rate to a 30-year low of 3.9 percent or lower.

Of course, the recent stock market swoon may delay or modify the workforce exit plans of some boomers.

Even so, the Census Bureau expects unemployment to fall permanently below four percent by 2005, and labor demand to exceed supply by as early as 2013.

By 2021, the labor shortage is expected to reach 12.4 million annually. By 2031, the American workplace may be nearly 28 million short of the more than 57 million new employees it needs to maintain current annual growth in per capita Gross Domestic Product.

Employers were “skill banking” at 4.5 percent unemployment. Can you imagine what it will be like with unemployment permanently below 4 percent?

It will be an *all out war for talent*.

So, for those of you who have been breathing a sigh of relief with the recent softening of the labor market, let me just say this – enjoy it while you can.

The struggle to attract and keep top talent will only get more difficult. Employers will soon be trying to gain an edge in an ever more competitive, fast-paced global marketplace -- with an increasingly smaller pool of skilled workers from which to choose.

Companies that are able to attract and retain the best talent – and to sustain high productivity – will be the winners in the global marketplace, and effective management of human capital will be a core strategic competency.

There is research to suggest that companies can experience a 5 % to 20 % boost in productivity just by improving employee satisfaction.

The significance of that isn't lost on CEOs. In a recent Yale School of Management and Gallup CEO survey, the area of business CEOs expected to invest most heavily in next year is people development.

In addition to all of the competitive and regulatory challenges that lie ahead, you will also be facing the considerable challenge of getting and keeping top Call Center talent.

How will you win the race for maximum productivity with other employers trying to hire away your top performers?

The answer is by adding value on employees' terms. The key for employers, of course, is to understand what those terms are.

That leads me to my second area of discussion.

As a business that's all about people, Randstad's success rests on our ability to listen and respond to the needs of the two million people we put to work around the world each year.

Here in North America, we've made listening an annual ritual.

This year, for the third year in a row, we hired the global research firm, Roper ASW, to talk to more than eleven hundred employees across the continent. We asked those employees how they feel about their jobs and their careers.

We also spoke with nearly a thousand employers, making the *Randstad North America Employee Review* one of the most extensive workplace surveys of any available today.

What did we learn?

To get a complete picture, let's go back to our first survey, conducted in fourth quarter of '99.

As we approached the new millennium, everyone was still pretty much riding the crest of the dot-com euphoria. Employees were taking a pretty entrepreneurial approach to their work.

Four in ten said they were *always* looking for a better job. Almost as many said they planned to change jobs within five years, and more than one in five reported they were actually *in the process* of changing jobs.

And the penchant for change didn't appear to be just a mood swing.

More than a third said they couldn't imagine doing just one thing as a career until they retire; almost half said it was foolish to commit to one employer; and more than eight in ten considered it normal for people to hop from job to job.

Job-hopping was the name of the game, and the winners were those who jumped the highest and fastest.

In fourth quarter 1999, the balance of power was heavily skewed toward employees. And employers were offering flexible work schedules, condensed workweeks and perks like concierge service, paid sabbaticals and even pet insurance to convince them to stay.

One Seattle software company even created dock space for workers who wanted to commute by kayak.

What a difference a year makes!

Our second continent-wide survey of workforce attitudes – conducted in fourth quarter 2000, at the beginning of the economic downturn – found employees of all generations...and in all segments...less likely to job-hop.

Employee attitudes had almost flip-flopped. Instead of finding virtually everyone passively or actively looking for a better job, nearly eight in ten defined success as finding a company where you want to work for a long time.

For dotcoms and the American worker, the honeymoon was definitely over.

Yet many of the changes in employee attitudes about work formed during the dotcom era – like the demand for a better balance between work and personal life, the desire for more flexibility, and re-definitions of concepts of loyalty and career -- had taken hold.

So while economic uncertainty has found employees *across the board* taking a less entrepreneurial approach to work over the past two survey periods, employee expectations remain very high.

The 2002 survey, conducted in the first quarter of this year, found employees even less interested in job hopping... even more interested in finding a better work/life balance...and more demanding than ever on the loyalty front.

Employees now look at loyalty as a two-way street. And employers are being asked to return that loyalty.

Since we first began asking the question – “Are you always looking for a better opportunity?” -- we’ve seen a ten percent drop in the number of workers who answer “yes.”

Employees are clearly concerned about the weak economy. They’re discouraged about today’s job market. And they’re willing to make some concessions to avoid a layoff...although employers may overestimate how much.

Most employees don’t want to take a pay cut...

- But nearly three in four said they’d be willing to work more hours, if required
- More than three in four said they’d be willing to take a temporary freeze on wages if they had to...
- And almost seven in ten said they’d be willing to work fewer hours to help the company through hard times.

What about employees’ wish list for 2002?

Flexibility continues to rank high, which speaks to employees' increasing desire for a better work/life balance.

Employees want a flexible workplace and leeway in when and how they work. And they want an employer who understands that personal lives are important.

Even before 9/11, we had seen that as the economy cooled, the financial frenzy of the past was being replaced by a return to core values.

People were "re-centering" and placing more value on the non-material things that matter most: family, community, and personal well-being.

In 2000, balancing work and personal life tied with job success as the *number one employee priority*. By 2001, we were all feeling pretty shell-shocked because the boom had gone bust...along with dreams of early retirement and the balances of many investment accounts.

Then came 9/11.

The dramatic events of the past year – the surge in layoffs, the terrorist attacks, and the investigations of corporate fraud – have crystallized the shift in priorities.

Now in 2002, focusing on what *really matters* makes more sense to people than ever before.

In our personal lives, this means focusing more on our families. This year's survey found almost *three times* as many employees saying that family is their top priority as those listing work as number one.

People also want the workplace to reflect this focus on family. Two-thirds want to feel like their co-workers and supervisors are part of their family.

Interestingly enough, employees don't think their emphasis on family takes anything away from their job performance. Only one in ten workers say things at home easily distract them. Half say they aren't distracted at all.

In 2000, 30 percent said it was hard to make strides in a demanding job and also have a family. That number dropped to 27 percent in this year's survey.

Flexibility, of course, makes work/life balance possible and addresses employees' desire for trust and autonomy. So expect the demand for flexibility to remain strong.

A few companies have taken exceptional steps here...

Marriott International has set up a 24-hour hotline to help employees with family and personal problems.

At BE&K, a construction company in Birmingham, Alabama, employees who undergo a personal crisis can use the company plane to get to another city quickly.

OSI, a company that operates more than 60 Call Centers nationwide for clients like AT&T, American Express, and Citibank, has instituted in-house daycare services.

Of course, these are the exceptions -- but they illustrate the importance of a family-friendly philosophy and making sure that philosophy trickles down through the organization.

Our research indicates that that isn't happening at some companies. While three in four employers say they are more understanding today than they have been in the past, only six in ten employees say this is a reality.

Quite honestly, if flexibility isn't *real* for agents and reps on the front lines, then you're losing out on one of the most powerful tools you have for retaining top talent.

The good news is that flexibility is not only good for employees, but recent research suggests that it can be good for the company, its customers, and its shareholders as well.

In fact, a recent Watson Wyatt study found that companies with the best "human capital" strategies had a three times greater return to shareholders over five years than companies without such strategies.

A collegial, flexible workplace ranked second on the list of management practices with the most impact on shareholder value. Telecommuting, job sharing, flextime, and communications integrity were all associated with increased market value.

Also at the top of employees' wish list for 2002 is...trust.

In 2000, employees ranked trust as the top definition of job success, with 9 in 10 employees defining success as *being trusted to get the job done*. Employees said their employer's confidence in their ability to succeed – more than money or title – is what really makes them feel successful.

In 2002, employees not only want you to trust them to get the job done, but they want you to trust them enough to communicate with them – fully, truthfully, and often. They want to know how they're doing and how the company is doing – not a surprise, I suppose, in the wake of Enron, WorldCom and Adelphia.

Open, honest communication, of course, is key to any relationship, and the relationship between employees and employers is no exception. Indeed, if ever there was a "magic pill" to boost employee productivity, open and honest communication may be it.

Employees who regularly receive information about their own and the company's performance are more satisfied with almost *every* aspect of their job, including the type of work they do, what they think of their bosses, and how much they're paid.

Our research shows that employees who receive regular communications:

- Are less anxious about job security, and less likely to seek out other job opportunities
- Are more loyal to their employer and consider their employer more loyal to them.
- Have higher morale and are more optimistic about the future of the company.
- Are more likely to think their employers are concerned about their needs and are working to help them develop into better employees.

... All of which translates to higher productivity.

A year ago we took a whole new look at our own internal communications. Frankly, it wasn't great.

There was no plan, no management of the mix of messages to employees and no single, trusted and credible *voice*. It seemed like everyone was talking – I'm not sure they were saying much, but they certainly were talking – and almost *nobody* was listening.

Morale and productivity were as low as they had ever been at Randstad.

So we went to work, taking our cue from our communications around the event of 9/11.

At the time of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, we had 80 internal staff and 1,752 temporary and contract employees working in lower Manhattan and Washington, D.C.

We quickly confirmed the safety of our Washington employees and 34 Manhattan-based internal staff. Confirming the safety of our 871 temporary workers in lower Manhattan was a lot more difficult. Telephone lines and cell sites were down, and most living in lower Manhattan had found temporary shelter elsewhere.

On a given day, there could be as many as 225 staffing employees working out of our Merrill Lynch office in the World Financial Center across the street from the World Trade Center Towers, and on the morning of September 11, there were two Randstad temporaries on assignment at Seven World Trade Center, which collapsed the afternoon of the attacks.

We were also very concerned about the hundreds of workers who may have been on their way to assignments in the subway station directly below the World Trade Center when the towers collapsed.

It took us 345 hours – working day and night -- to confirm the safety of each and every one of those 871 employees.

Throughout the process, we were communicating with our colleagues across North America and around the world using a variety of channels, and here's what we learned:

- People want to feel like they belong to something bigger than themselves -- that they're not alone.
- They want to be told the good news *and* the bad. They want to be leveled with.
- And they want to be *heard*.

So, as we shared the good news and the bad at the end of each day during those terrible days after 9/11 – how many talent were confirmed safe and how many still missing – a miraculous thing happened -- we began to see a new oneness and sense of mission among our colleagues – and a new spirit of teamwork.

Learning from that, we revamped our internal communications program.

Today, not only are we communicating through more channels, more openly and more often -- but we're doing a lot better job of listening.

One thing I've frankly been blown away by is employees' response to a new toll-free employee feedback voice mailbox we've put in place.

It's available 24/7. Callers can say anything they want, anonymously, if they prefer. There's no recrimination, so they are free to say it just like they see it. And, whatever they say, they are guaranteed that I personally will hear what they have to say. We're getting three kinds of comments: compliments for other colleagues, ideas for improvement and complaints.

Those calls don't just disappear into a black hole. When a colleague compliments a colleague by name, I contact the employee and say, "thanks for your great example of teamwork."

When someone offers an idea for improvement, we make sure that the person who can make the improvement gets the message.

When someone calls with a complaint, we look at what we're doing and saying at headquarters and try to work on the root cause of the complaint.

What can I tell you? It's working.

Remember -- when you're talking about communications, you're not just talking about how the company is doing. You're talking about the person-to-person communication that takes place every day between supervisors and the people they supervise.

If performance reviews aren't happening, if folks don't have a clear sense of how they're doing -- and how their efforts contribute to the success of the team – no amount of newsletters and hotlines will make up for it.

What's true for business in general is true for communications. It all begins and ends with people.

Thus far, we've talked about flexibility and trust – and communications as a demonstration of trust – as key items on this year's employee wish list.

What about pay?

It's still important, of course. There's no question -- if you want to retain top talent, you need to pay people right.

One thing that became very clear in our research, however, is that while good pay is necessary, it's not enough to keep employees satisfied.

Indeed, employees told us that having work that is valued by their employer... working for an employer who understands the importance of employees' personal lives... and being trusted to get the job done – and to be leveled with – can matter just as much as pay.

In other words, pay still *rocks*, but it doesn't necessarily *rule* for employees today.

Those are some highlights of our three years of research of workplace attitudes and trends. Are there specific findings that apply to successfully staffing Call Centers?

That's my third area of discussion.

Of course, not all Call Centers are alike.

You'd expect some differences in an industry that accounts for nearly \$11 billion dollars in annual revenues, employs more than 293,000 workers, and generates more than \$500 billion dollars in annual sales.

Under the huge Call Center umbrella, there are a lot of industries represented and different types of Call Center operations -- outbound and inbound, consumer and business services, large Centers and small. Some Centers are way ahead in the area of technology, and some are taking a more conservative approach.

Probably all of you in this room have management challenges that are peculiar to your operation, and a little different from those of your colleagues.

Yet when you look at the big picture, there is some common ground.

For one thing, Call Centers are becoming increasingly important to business development.

Research compiled by Purdue University's Center for Customer-Driven Quality points out that in just a few short years companies will be moving Call Centers from back-office support to a core business development strategy.

For many of you, that's already happening.

Technology has opened new channels of access for customers like e-mail, fax-mail, and the Internet and has driven convergence of all these channels.

Even more importantly, technology has revolutionized business. In the post 1950's industrial era, manufacturers *pushed* products down through distributors and retailers to consumers.

Today, consumers -- empowered by the Internet -- *pull* whatever they need from the system, when they need it, at a price they're willing to pay. Or, as the marketing expert Phillip Kotler put it, consumers have gone from being the *hunted* to the *hunters*.

So five years from now, when we come to the ATA national conference, we may be talking about e-business centers that deliver all sorts of enhanced communications services to empowered consumers and business customers.

Those e-business centers would allow customers access to information at any time, from anywhere, and in any form.

In fact, the Purdue research concludes that over 90 percent of customer interactions will occur through e-business centers by the year 2005. And a lot of you folks may well be shaping that frontier.

What will that mean for your employees?

Obviously, it will mean their jobs will be even more challenging. They'll be part of the knowledge workforce I described earlier.

Already, of course, in many Call Centers, agents must carry on a conversation with a customer while surfing for information from five or six databases simultaneously.

In that kind of environment, in addition to flexibility, trust and open, honest communications -- which *all* employees appear to want these days -- you'll need to add three more elements if you want to keep top Call Center talent: training, career pathing and recognition.

There's no question that training will continue to be critical to Call Center success -- not only in hard skills like computing, but in the soft skills as well.

Agents will need to be skilled in both key areas in order to handle complex customer inquiries in *one* call -- a key measurement of customer satisfaction and Call Center productivity.

A word of caution.

One thing our surveys show is that while Generation Y may be the generation weaned on the video game -- the generation most adept on the computer -- Gen Yers very often lack the soft skills critical to successful interactions with customers. Those soft skills include the ability to listen, to deal with the public and to solve problems.

So soft skills training will continue to grow in importance, particularly for positions that are less about facilitating transactions than about building relationships.

In fact, a Hackett Benchmarking study of Call Centers found that top Call Centers spend twice as much on initial training and almost a third more in ongoing training when compared to mediocre- and low-performing Call Centers.

Training is key to retaining top Call Center talent. So are career pathing and recognition.

Of course, attracting and retaining top performers is one of the industry's biggest challenges. The average industry turnover rate is 73 percent a year, and the leading cause of dissatisfaction is a lack of promotion opportunities.

In today's tight employment environment, it's tempting to think people might be satisfied staying in place for the sake of self-preservation, if nothing else.

In fact, the Incoming Call Management Institute reports that only 60 percent of Call Centers now have a career pathing program for agents.

That's a slippery slope. Because the reality is, when the labor market heats back up, you're not going to be able to hire and retain the best people without making entry-level positions stepping-stones to a better future.

According to a Call Center Management Review report, 44 percent of Call Center agents today leave their jobs because of lack of career opportunities within their companies, or because they had a better opportunity on the outside -- and that's in a tough labor market.

Career growth doesn't have to necessarily be outside the Center.

To provide more viable career pathing, Cingular Wireless has created three levels of non-management occupations within its centers and one manager for each eight reps.

Recognition is another key to retention. A recent study of 1,000 Call Center job seekers points out that a key motivator for nearly 30 percent of Call Center employees is to be recognized for outstanding work.

One form of recognition is to make star performers mentors to entry-level people. That way, new people get valuable counsel, and leaders get some recognition and the experience of coaching.

OSI, the receivables management firm that I mentioned earlier, has instituted a “Peer Assisted Learning” -- or PAL -- mentoring program for its Call Center employees. Each new credit representative is assigned a top-performing mentor who works alongside the new rep for the first 60 days of employment.

The new people receive immediate one-to-one coaching, and the mentors are recognized in a new light...as coaches.

The PAL mentoring program has helped OSI’s Call Center reduce attrition by 30 percent over an 18-month period.

Indeed, our own survey shows that recognition is on the “universal wish list” of today’s employees.

It doesn’t have to be expensive. Certificates of appreciation, plaques, and luncheons – all have an impact.

And, as one Call Center manager told us, just making the effort to learn all his people’s names, something about their families, kids, or friends, goes a long way. He’s taking advantage of the “re-centering” trend I mentioned earlier.

Of course, you can’t retain good people unless you hire the right people in the first place.

Have you ever thought about how costly ineffective hiring can be?

One study estimated the cost of a bad hire at up to 26 times the average salary of a position, roughly \$600,000 to \$800,000 dollars per person, when you factor in salary, bonuses, benefits, recruiting costs, bad decisions, unwanted turnover and unhappy customers.

On the other hand, improving hiring can deliver value quickly.

When I-fleet, a roadside service provider, changed its interviewing process to include probing for attitude, the desire to help others, and the wish to have a flexible job schedule, its turnover rate dropped by 40 percent a year.

One high performing Call Center manager has achieved results simply by insisting that candidates be interviewed by telephone. He found that interviewing well in person did not necessarily translate to interpersonal skills on the telephone. It’s a small change that has made a big difference for that company.

So far, we've covered a lot of ground on employee attitudes in general, and how they might impact Call Centers in particular.

That brings me to my final area of discussion today.

How can you use these findings to your advantage? What can you take away from all this?

First and foremost, while today's job market is tight, and staying put is in, **this is a critical year for employers to build solid relationships and long-term loyalty with employees, particularly with your top performers.**

Customer satisfaction will be the key differentiator for business success ahead. And the key to achieving that is employee satisfaction.

The economy will turn around. The job market will heat back up, and employees will have options to change careers or switch jobs.

Building strong relationships with talented employees *now* is a smart move for the future. Investing in employees and giving them opportunities to refine, celebrate and be recognized for their skills will help build those relationships.

In a digital era, attracting and retaining the right people is an increasingly complex matter and the stakes are getting higher as we move toward integrated, e-business centers.

So you've got to hire right. A good place to begin is to clearly understand the success profile for your Center.

Randstad, for example, recently conducted research to identify ideal talent profiles for two of our Call Center clients – a high profile computer manufacturer and a top receivables management firm.

The objective was to identify common characteristics of top Call Center performers, and poor performers as well.

Interestingly, results pointed to a nearly opposite profile for each company.

At the computer company, where Call Center reps must answer complex questions about computer hardware, we looked at nearly 300 employees who had titles as sales representatives and escalation specialists.

Reps at that company typically held college degrees and earned higher than average wages. But we found that among these degree holders those with a Bachelor of Science degree performed better than those with other degrees.

As you might expect, those with technical majors were top performers. Next in line were individuals with humanities degrees, likely due to their communications skills and the ability to build rapport with callers.

In the case of the receivables management firm, our analysis indicated that a significant number of employees terminated for tardiness actually fit the profile of otherwise successful employees.

Many of the new hires who were tardy were challenged to get to training classes that began during rush hour in a congested area not served by public transportation.

The analysis also revealed that younger, more educated employees were, ironically, less likely to be successful employees in the long run. While they may have had enough flexibility in their personal lives to show up on time for training, they were also more likely to job-hop for a higher-paying opportunity.

So you have two very different ideal talent profiles for two very different situations. Yet, in each situation, the data might guide productive, cost-efficient workforce planning.

In the computer company's situation, it might involve hiring reps with certain degrees, or offering additional coaching to reps who might be performing below expectations but otherwise meet the top performance profile.

In the second situation, our survey findings can be used to guide bringing more flexibility into scheduling, or developing virtual Call Center positions, allowing reps to work from home.

If businesses have this kind of data before they set up operations, they might look to locate Call Centers close to public transportation access, or they might consider deploying technology that could deliver more workforce flexibility.

For example, logistically challenged single mothers might be matched to an 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. shift, traditionally a slow time for inbound telephone traffic.

But Call Center staffers could now combine light telephone traffic with answering e-mails and Web inquiries, and thereby increase overall 24/7 Call Center productivity.

**A second takeaway is to listen closely to what employees say is really important to them. What makes them feel truly valued and successful...like trust.**

Convey trust in explicit and implicit ways. Employees want open, honest and complete information. Demonstrate trust by communicating with employees fully, openly, and candidly about how they're doing and how the company is doing.

And don't just *tell* them; *show* them that they are valued professionals, trusted to get the job done. Micro managing and second-guessing say just the opposite. Don't do it.

As management guru, Steven Covey, has written, “trust is the emotional bank account between two people that enables them to have a win-win performance agreement.”

He continues: “If two people trust each other – based on the trustworthiness of each other -- they can then enjoy clear communication, empathy, synergy, and productive interdependency. Trust – or the lack of it – is at the root of success or failure in relationships and in the bottom-line results of business, industry, education, and government.”

*The New York Times* recently reported that the recent talks between Major League Baseball players and owners could usher in a period in which baseball’s owners promote the game by praising their players instead of scoring political points by criticizing them as greedy.

That would be refreshing to many fans and reverse a trend dating back to the late 1960’s, when player-owner enmity began to take hold.

And it might reinforce another Stephen Covey axiom. He said that sometimes you have to treat people according to their potential, not their behavior. As most any parent of a teenager can tell you, treat someone as he is, and he will remain just that -- as he is. Treat someone as she can be, and she will become as she can be.

A third suggestion...and one I’ve already touched on several times... is to understand that in today’s climate **an employee’s vision of an ideal job is having an employer who understands that personal lives are important.**

It’s a key theme running throughout our research.

The events over the last year have propelled personal concerns to the forefront of the American psyche.

Given the dramatic increase in the number of people who say family is a top priority, you can build ties that bind by continuing to address these needs.

Look for ways to incorporate family as a value in the workplace, and employees will reward you for it. Talk won’t be enough for today’s more skeptical employee. You’ll need to *walk the talk* by finding innovative ways to bring flexibility into the workplace.

Employees who feel they have some flexibility – some control in their lives – will be more satisfied with their jobs and more productive. So, focus on the quality of your employees’ work, not on how well they punch a time clock.

**Remember** that money is important, but it’s not everything. Employees are driven by a variety of needs, primary among them being *trusted* to get the job done.

**Realize** that employees who have a measure of autonomy and control through flexible work arrangements, supported by family-friendly management, are, by and large, are happier with their work situations and are more likely to stick around.

**Recognize** that employees want to belong to an organization whose management trusts them enough to tell them the truth – openly, honestly, and fully – about how they are doing and how the company is doing. Employees in that situation will be happier and more likely to remain with you regardless of the economy and the job market.

I've touched on a lot this morning, and I know it's a lot to digest. Quite honestly, I've only scratched the surface of our research.

I've enjoyed this opportunity to share some of these ideas with you.

Thank you again for your time and interest.

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