

Creating Healthy

MOST OF US spend three quarters of our waking hours working. If we are to lead happy productive lives we need to find work environments where we are growing into the best that we can become. Here are some of the ways that companies can create better organizations:

1. Recognize that we are all in this together

We need to break down the barriers that separate "them" and "us." Not all large corporations are bad workplaces and all vegetarian restaurants, new age magazines and holistic health centres are good. I don't care how many spiritual books and courses people have attended, the proof is in action and not talk.

2. Embrace diversity

Diversity adds flexibility and additional perspectives, which add depth and breadth to a company's structure, products and service. Lippman said, "When we all think alike there is no thinking." To work with others of different racial, sexual, age, values and learning styles offers us an opportunity for growth.

3. Celebrate what was good in the past

What are the best qualities from old style organizations that can be incorporated into new organizations? Let's examine our achievements and find the positive lessons and creations that emerge. We don't switch from old to new style organizations, or from old to new ways of thinking, overnight and we may spend years with a foot in each camp while this transition takes place.

4. Develop new criteria for success

Success in traditional organizations has been a substantial annual profit. We now need to develop other criteria

such as, "Does the organization benefit the world in the long as well as short term?" Companies should go broke to do this. The Body Shop understands that if it doesn't sell products then it has no resources with which to develop its staff and create projects to help others.

5. Empower ourselves and others

People who are doing what they love sparkle. Rather than making individuals fit a set pattern we can help them use their strengths and talents to better both themselves and our organizations. Let me ask you a question. "How much of your talents, interests and skills can you use in your work presently?" When you can bring 100%, instead of 25%, to your work you will have more creativity to solve the problems facing the organization.

6. Work in our sphere of influence

Are we using our life energy railing about things we cannot influence? This leads to frustration, anger and bitterness. Instead we need to identify an area where we can make a difference. As Gandhi said, "We must be the change we want in the world." If our workplace does not support life enhancing values we may decide to change jobs so that we can be with others who are moving in a similar direction.

7. Share freely

The fear of scarcity—that there is not enough money and power and that we have to guard against others who want to take everything from us—is an old paradigm thought. The best way of overcoming the fear of scarcity, and all fears for that matter, is to do what we most fear. For example, if we hoard information, we could share our knowledge with others that would benefit from that information.



Organizations

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8. Support play, creativity and informality

How many of us enjoy our work? Without joy there is no optimism. Without optimism there is no hope for solutions to our existing problems. Play will increase creativity which in turn will allow us to see innovative solutions for complex problems.

9. Ask for authority to solve problems

E.F. Schumacher in *Good Work* spoke of there being a moron shortage in our world. The hierarchical organization structure where a few bright people with all the answers sit at the top telling all the less bright workers what to do no longer works. Research has proven that people work harder when they are involved in solving their own problems than when they are told what to do by others.

10. Recognize and develop vision

One of the great problems among our leaders today is that long range vision is absent. We have all seen what the present vision of our society has brought us, and this is a time for all of us to share our ideas. All of us have a part of the vision we need.

11. Practice ethics

Native Americans say, "Do what is good unto seven generations." This is the kind of ethical vision around which our new organizations need to form. If we reward ethical people and penalize those that are not ethical we will build trust and commitment within our organizations. I believe a time will come, and not in the distant future, when companies who are not exhibiting ethical practices with their staff, customers and products will cease to exist.

Tanis Helliwell, author of *Take Your Soul to Work* published by Random House, is an inspiring keynote speaker and seminar leader who has worked internationally since 1976 helping individuals and organizations to develop their potential. She has been a faculty member for The Banff Centre for Management and some of her clients include IBM, CBC, Royal Bank, Alberta Medical Association, and World Future Society in Washington DC.

