



Briefing June 2009

# The DNA of a Winning Culture

## At a Glance

- ◆ A main driver of an organization's success is in the way it treats its employees. CEOs and other senior leaders who embrace this notion make health and safety a priority.
- ◆ Health and safety directly impact employee engagement and thus organizational performance.
- ◆ Good programs are not sufficient. Leaders must instill confidence in their employees.

## INTRODUCTION

**W**hat is the key to a winning culture? Typically, the answer has been that it can be found in the way an organization serves its customers.

However, a number of business leaders and other experts disagree. They argue that the main driver of an organization's success will, in fact, be found in the way it treats its employees.

CEOs and other senior leaders who embrace this notion make health and safety a priority. They understand that there is an important link between health and safety and productivity. Treating their employees well makes their organizations more attractive to consumers and investors, gives them a more engaged and productive workforce, and reduces their health-related costs. These messages emerged clearly during the 2009 Leadership Summit

led by the Industrial Accident Prevention Association. This one-day event, held on April 21 in Toronto, brought together some 100 CEOs, presidents, and other senior leaders, many of whom are also signatories to the CEO Health & Safety Leadership Charter. (See box “The CEO Health & Safety Leadership Charter.”)

The thought leaders and global experts attending the event argued that successful organizations are particularly creative when it comes to building and promoting a culture that inspires their employees. They also emphasized that this kind of culture must be driven by senior leaders and must be based on the philosophy that the well-being of employees is the foundation of an organization’s productivity.

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CEOs and presidents were given a number of convincing reasons why they must get involved, and they heard some imaginative and innovative ideas on how they can build a winning culture.

## VIEW HEALTH AND SAFETY AS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY PERFORMANCE

The social reputation of organizations is becoming increasingly important. Tim Sanders, a former Yahoo! leadership coach and the author of the book *Saving the World at Work*,<sup>1</sup> gave the keynote speech, and he framed the issue of health and safety in the context of corporate social responsibility (CSR). He said CSR captures the concern a company has for the general health of the world at large. Fifty per cent of brand equity today, he said, is determined by how consumers see a company’s CSR performance, and that includes responsibility for how a company treats its employees, the communities it operates in, and the environment.

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1 Tim Sanders, *Saving the World at Work*. (New York: Broadway Business, 2008).

But it is not only the consumers who take notice. Michael Jantzi, President and founder of social investment analysis firm Jantzi Research, explained that a growing number of social and mainstream investors, such as pension plans and other institutional investors, are including CSR factors in their risk assessment before they will invest in a listed company. One indication of the growing importance of these factors is a recent publication by the CFA Institute—a global, not-for-profit association of investment professionals that awards the Chartered Financial Analyst™ designation. The publication is entitled *Environmental, Social, and Governance Factors at Listed Companies*—

### The CEO Health & Safety Leadership Charter

In 2005, a group of CEOs came together, under the encouragement of Duncan Hawthorne of Bruce Power and Maureen Shaw of the Industrial Accident Prevention Association, to establish the CEO Health & Safety Leadership Charter. The Charter is a series of seven commitments that leaders support and agree to take action on within their organizations. The seven commitments are:

- ◆ Subscribe to the principle that nothing is more important than the health, safety, and well-being of employees, contractors, visitors, and the surrounding community.
- ◆ Integrate health and safety into business strategies, processes, and performance measures, and recognize that good health and safety performance supports good business results.
- ◆ Effectively manage health and safety risks by eliminating, minimizing, or controlling hazards.
- ◆ Strive for continuous health and safety improvement and provide the leadership and internal capacity to make this happen.
- ◆ Provide an environment that enables all employees to participate and work collaboratively in developing, promoting, and improving health and safety at work.
- ◆ Extend health and safety efforts beyond the workplace, recognizing and supporting related initiatives within the community.
- ◆ Participate within a CEO health and safety leadership learning community by providing and receiving information and best practices, with the goal of continuously improving health and safety strategies, programming, and performance.

The number of leaders who have embraced the Charter has grown to over 300. The fundamental message is that organizations that are serious about the safety of their employees demonstrate leadership from the top.

*A Manual for Investors*.<sup>2</sup> Jantzi suggests that the next generation of analysts to have gone through the CFA Institute's designation process will be better versed in assessing these risks, and they will place a greater importance on these risks than did previous generations of analysts.

The increased attention given by investors to CSR is significant, as it suggests that investors increasingly see CSR as an indicator of the long-term sustainability of a business. Jantzi makes the argument that investments that take CSR criteria into account are "stickier"—socially responsible investors value the sustainability of a business and are less likely than others to withdraw their investments at the first sign of difficulty. Like Sanders, Jantzi says that the main risk assessment differentiator, on the social side, is the way companies treat their employees. This is particularly true when the competition for talent is strong.

## TREATING EMPLOYEES AS ASSETS CREATES BRAND AMBASSADORS

Employees have to be seen as assets, not liabilities, since it is a company's people and their behaviour that ultimately predict the quality of the company and its products. Employees that are treated as assets become very effective brand ambassadors, are more likely to stay with the company, and are more engaged. Max Caldwell of Towers Perrin noted in a recent article that one key differentiator of companies with superior financial performance is an engaged workforce.<sup>3</sup> Towers Perrin defines workforce engagement as "employees' willingness and ability to help their companies succeed, chiefly by freely and consistently delivering discretionary effort on the job."<sup>4</sup> Employers must treat their employees as their most valuable assets since "higher employee engagement levels are highly

correlated with better business performance as measured by revenue, earnings, and other key business metrics."<sup>5</sup>

Sanders stressed that we must cease treating health and safety as a compliance issue and start treating it as the excellence issue that it is. "By demanding this high level of job safety," he said, "you create a culture of protection as opposed to a culture of compliance, or as Ray Anderson [CEO of Interface Inc.] calls the practice, 'being as bad as the law will allow.'"<sup>6</sup> Excellence, however, means a stronger brand, better sales, and a healthier bottom line.

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Sanders also pointed to Jim Goodnight, one of the founders of software firm SAS Institute, who was able to significantly reduce his firm's marketing budget because his employees appreciate the SAS Institute's concept of work-life balance and its family-friendly employee lifestyle so much that they are essentially doing much of the job for him. The company sponsored on-site daycare for working parents and established an on-site health-care centre offering free services to all employees and their families. The cafeteria served meals to employees and their families. Other initiatives included the weekly delivery of fresh flowers, the launch of an artist-in-residence program, and the opening of a state-of-the-art gymnasium. SAS also offered unlimited sick days because, said Goodnight, the company knew that a sick employee turned in poor work, spread his illness, and took longer to recover. Even though SAS Institute does not offer stock options, the turnover rate is less than 5 per cent, which is about 70 per cent lower than the industry average. The savings from reduced hiring and training costs add up to more than US\$70 million a year.<sup>7</sup>

2 CFA Institute, *Environmental, Social, and Governance Factors at Listed Companies—A Manual for Investors* [online]. (New York: Author, 2008), [cited May 21, 2009]. [www.cfapubs.org/doi/pdf/10.2469/ccb.v2008.n2.1](http://www.cfapubs.org/doi/pdf/10.2469/ccb.v2008.n2.1).

3 Max Caldwell, "Uncovering the Hidden Value in Corporate Social Responsibility," *The Journal of the EDS Agility Alliance* 3, 1 [online]. (July 2008), [cited May 21, 2009]. [www.towersperrin.com/tp/getwebcachedoc?webc=USA/2008/200807/Uncovering\\_the\\_Hidden\\_Value\\_in\\_Corporate\\_Social\\_Responsibility.pdf](http://www.towersperrin.com/tp/getwebcachedoc?webc=USA/2008/200807/Uncovering_the_Hidden_Value_in_Corporate_Social_Responsibility.pdf), p. 70.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 75.

5 Towers Perrin, "Global Workforce Study, 2007" [online]. Stamford, Conn.: Author, 2008 [cited May 21, 2009]. [www.towersperrin.com/tp/showdctm.doc.jsp?country=global&url=Master\\_Brand\\_2/USA/News/Spotlights/2008/2008\\_07\\_30\\_Spotlight\\_Corporate\\_Social\\_Responsibility.htm](http://www.towersperrin.com/tp/showdctm.doc.jsp?country=global&url=Master_Brand_2/USA/News/Spotlights/2008/2008_07_30_Spotlight_Corporate_Social_Responsibility.htm).

6 Sanders, *Saving the World at Work*, p. 143.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 57.

## REDUCE STRESS AND IMPROVE MENTAL HEALTH

Speakers noted that mental health and stress are important for two reasons. First, stress is one of the main reasons for employee turnover. Second, the vast majority of workplace injuries are linked to stress and mental health problems. Profitable employers therefore see a clear link between health—particularly mental health—and productivity. Joseph Ricciutti is Client Solution Leader Canada for Watson Wyatt Worldwide. In his presentation, he said successful companies have a unique way of operating when it comes to their people and how they are treated. Profitable employers acknowledge that significant stress exists in the workplace, and they connect the dots between HR policies and health programs that alleviate stress and other health risks to business outcomes. According to Ricciutti, companies with effective mental health programs and low levels of

stress experienced by their employees achieve superior performance in three areas: revenue per employee, market value, and shareholder returns.

## LINK HEALTH AND SAFETY TO HUMAN CAPITAL AND FINANCIAL OUTCOMES

Designing programs that support a winning culture requires companies to study and measure the quality of life of their employees and implement programs based on these company-specific findings (See box “Case Study: Homewood Corporation.”) Once implemented, these programs—often perceived as “soft” approaches—must continue to be grounded in hard facts. Ricciutti reminded leaders that any tools or methodologies that are used to measure the impact of new programs and strategies must be grounded in research. They must clearly demonstrate how the programs promote the health and engagement

### Case Study: Homewood Corporation

Edgardo Pérez, Homewood Corporation’s CEO and President, spoke to summit participants about how Homewood has begun to build a culture of genuine concern and respect for others while keeping the focus on measurable results. Homewood is active in three lines of business: mental health and addictions, employee assistance programs, and senior care. Pérez said that the motivation to focus on the needs of the employees came from the realization that Homewood is in fact helping its customers and patients improve their quality of life “by improving the quality of life of our employees.” Before Homewood embarked on transforming its corporate culture, a number of important obstacles and challenges were identified:

- ◆ Health and productivity initiatives did not link to meaningful business outcomes.
- ◆ No measures were in place to benchmark initiatives to industry best practices.
- ◆ No solid data existed to support the investment cost for an acceptable return on capital (ROC) and earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization (EBITDA).
- ◆ Many companies offer assistance but their services and tools are not grounded in the research required to build confidence.

Homewood chose to address these challenges by partnering with Watson Wyatt (WW) to use WW’s Pathway model to identify and prioritize human capital investments. Pérez found it particularly important to be able to measure his corporation’s performance against best practices and to benchmark to industry scores. Homewood believes that it now has a tool that links its health and productivity initiatives, such as disability management and communication, to concrete business results. Targeted investments in workforce effectiveness and health programs at Homewood have led to the realization of several benefits, including:

- ◆ the creation of a quality culture;
- ◆ a high retention rate for employees; and
- ◆ cost-effective services.

Pérez said that as CEO he made the development of a healthy workplace an organizational goal and had it approved by the Board of Directors. He stressed that board support is critical to the success of the kind of cultural transformation that Homewood is going through. Another important element is the leadership provided by the CEO who, Pérez said, must take ownership of the initiative. The CEO needs to get personally involved and must play a role in health and safety committee meetings as well. In closing, Pérez underlined the importance of standards, such as the National Quality Institute Standards, and effective assessment tools, such as Pathway, that help companies prioritize their investments based on impact.

Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

of employees and establish the causal link of healthy and engaged employees to human capital and financial outcomes. One of the tools which help companies decide where investments should be made is the online survey-based Health & Productivity Diagnosis (HPD)<sup>8</sup> delivered by Watson Wyatt and the Industrial Accident Prevention Association (IAPA). The design of the tool was based on Pathway, Watson Wyatt's comprehensive workforce and program effectiveness model. HPD gauges and makes recommendations in the areas of lost productivity and gaps in both workplace and employee health. The Health & Productivity Diagnosis results show current lost productivity, absences, health-care costs, possible future projected costs, and opportunities to reduce these costs.

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**It is as important to fit in to the company's culture, as it is to have all the right skills and competencies.**

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## GET "GOOGLEY"

The culture of an organization is reflected in "how things are done" and consists of a set of beliefs and values that gives people a tacit understanding of how to behave a certain way. The goal of organizational health and safety messages, initiatives, and programs is to promote the value of health and safety and to instill in all stakeholders in an organization the impetus to behave in a healthy and safe way. Sue Wuthrich is the Global Benefits Director at Google Incorporated. She explained that Google creates a culture of health by hiring the right people, removing distractions, and focusing employees on what they do best.

Google employs a multi-step screening process for new hires that places a very high importance on determining whether the candidate is a "cultural" fit. Wuthrich says that it is as important to fit in to the company's "Googley" culture, as it is to have all the right skills and competencies. Finding the right cultural fit also ensures that tailor-made health and safety programs and policies already in place at the company will resonate with the new employee.

One of the main functions of Google's benefit program is to remove distractions for the employees so that they can concentrate on their work. The benefits are structured and divided into three categories:

- ◆ **secure foundation**—life and disability insurance;
- ◆ **core programs**—health, vacations/holidays, retirement, pre-tax spending accounts; and
- ◆ **"Googley" programs**—wellness programs (on-site doctor and massage), personal convenience (e.g., on-site laundry and oil changes), family programs (e.g., near-site and backup child care), and "Google Green" (local shuttle service, etc.).

Particularly the company's "Googley" programs address common distractions that affect employees and frequently cause them to be preoccupied or absent.

Addressing these most common issues on-site significantly reduces employees' stress and lets them focus on what they do best. With a reference to the importance Wyatt Watson's Ricciutti placed on research and establishing causal linkages, Wuthrich underlined that—in keeping with Google's business imperative that all new product proposals must be backed up by data—all programs are very closely monitored and evaluated to ensure their continued effectiveness.

## MAKE HEALTH AND SAFETY RELEVANT TO ALL GENERATIONS

Generational identities are major component of organizational culture, and their respective behaviours and mindsets influence how employees from each generational group accept and engage in health and safety programs. (See box "Understanding Generational Differences.") Adwoa Buahene, Managing Partner of n-gen People Performance Inc., suggested that the relationship between an organization and its employees must align with employees' values, expectations, and behaviours from a *generational* perspective. Buahene said generational identities translate into distinct workplace behaviours as they relate to:

- ◆ relationship with the organization;
- ◆ relationship with authority;
- ◆ relationship with colleagues;
- ◆ work styles;
- ◆ management styles; and
- ◆ learning styles.

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<sup>8</sup> The Health & Productivity Diagnosis (HPD) is accessible online at [www.iapa.ca/Main/productivity/index.aspx](http://www.iapa.ca/Main/productivity/index.aspx).

In order to design a strong health and safety culture, organizations should raise the awareness of generational identities and design integrated solutions, programs, and policies that will speak to all generations.

### Understanding Generational Differences

Each generation has a different perspective on its relationship with employers, authority, and colleagues, and brings a different work, management, and learning style into the organization.

#### TRADITIONALISTS (BORN BETWEEN 1922 AND 1945)

These individuals are typically focused on building a legacy. They respect authority and hierarchical systems. As a result, job titles and seniority are important to them. In a work context, they typically want to know what they can do to help you.

#### BABY BOOMERS (BORN BETWEEN 1946 AND 1964)

Baby boomers are driven by the goal of putting their stamp on things. They often challenge authority and prefer organizations that are non-hierarchical and democratic. Boomers want to show you what they can do for you.

#### GENERATION XERS (BORN BETWEEN 1965 AND 1980)

Members of the Generation X cohort are typically focused on maintaining their independence. They are unimpressed by authority—they save their respect for individuals who are able to demonstrate their skills. Generation Xers are driven by what you can do for them.

#### GENERATION YERS (BORN BETWEEN 1981 AND 2000)

The goal for many Generation Yers is to find work and to create a life that has meaning. Their respect for authority figures is based on demonstrated competence, not on job title or position. This group is most interested in what organizations and leaders are able to do for them right now.

Adwoa Buahene, Managing Partner of n-gen People Performance Inc., offered an important caveat about generational groupings that is worth reinforcing: Under no circumstances should organizations or managers label individuals based only on age. It is never acceptable to stereotype an employee. For example, if your employee is a Generation Xer, you should not label him or her as a high-expectation/high-maintenance employee. As a manager, you should seek to understand the characteristics, motivators, and personality of each of your direct reports. However, it is interesting to consider generational identities as one possible lens through which to view your employee groups. The research in generational identities has shown that there is enough commonality across a core group of people to allow organizations to speak of generational identities in a meaningful way. By taking a broad view of your workforce, you can create integrated strategies that engage all four generations.

Source: The Conference Board of Canada; n-gen People Performance Incorporated.

## LISTEN TO THE EDGES

Many good programs implemented today, such as ergonomic workplace assessments, were actually developed based on ideas that had been around for years before leaders noticed them and understood their benefits. In his keynote speech at the Summit, Sanders suggested that leaders must “listen to the edges” in order to identify innovative solutions that may already exist but have not made it into the mainstream yet. Some of his recommendations as to where companies should invest in their employees and what they can do to improve their employees’ quality of life at work were to:

- ♦ provide natural light;
- ♦ limit daily computer time;
- ♦ promote workplace wellness programs; and
- ♦ demand the highest levels of safety for employees.<sup>9</sup>

## DEFINE REALITY AND GIVE HOPE

The design of and investment in good programs, however, is not sufficient. Whether or not a company has a strong health and safety culture is a question of senior management taking a sincere interest in employee well-being and providing the necessary leadership.<sup>10</sup> Referring to the message in John Maxwell’s book *Leadership Gold—Lessons I’ve Learned From a Lifetime of Leading*,<sup>11</sup> Sanders said he believes that the task of leadership is to define reality and give hope. To Sanders, defining reality and giving hope means actively managing the perspective of employees and eradicating negativity. He believes that too many employees feel that “there isn’t enough to go around.” These employees are very focused on the negative information that the media readily and abundantly provide. The same employees, whether they own equities or not, check the declining stock market indices and discuss the potential negative fallout with their colleagues several times a day. They

9 Sanders, *Saving the World at Work*, p. 126.

10 Towers Perrin, “Global Workforce Study, 2007.” [online].

11 John C. Maxwell, *Leadership Gold: Lessons I’ve Learned From a Lifetime of Leading* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008).

seek out messages that confirm their view—such as stories and statistics on industry layoffs, organizational cutbacks, or cuts in funding. This kind of view of the world, said Sanders, encourages intra-company competition for a perceived scarcity of resources; discourages inter-group collaboration; and creates “personal recessions.” It is the responsibility of leaders to create an “abundance mentality” by changing the information that employees consume during their workday. That means providing a steady stream of information on how things ought to be and instilling confidence. According to Daniel Goleman, best-selling author of several books on emotional intelligence and leadership, research shows that a leader’s emotional style drives everyone else’s moods and behaviours—and consequently organizational performance.<sup>12</sup>

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**Business is simultaneously competition and cooperation, and that competitors can benefit each other by cooperating (and sharing costs) in one area while remaining competitors in other areas.**

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## BUILD ALLIANCES

Successful leaders build internal and external alliances that help to substantiate and promote the long-term tangible benefits of health and safety and wellness programs. Sanders suggested involving representatives from the HR benefits group, the chief financial officer’s office, and the legal department to determine the impact these programs can have on insurance claims and the company balance sheet, and to demonstrate the benefit of legal risk abatement. Internal coalitions provide the evidence for the business case. External partnerships are important because few businesses can manage health and safety successfully without their business partners. Sanders made this point by comparing how the performances of Wal-Mart and Costco are impacted by how they are perceived to treat their suppliers. Wal-Mart, he said, has a reputation for

“strong-arming” its suppliers, which has negatively affected its public image. Costco on the other hand is one of the most admired companies in the United States, “with employee and supplier relations contributing heavily to its ranking” in *Fortune* magazine’s annual list of the world’s most admired and respected companies.<sup>13</sup> In response to a question from the audience, Sanders cited *Co-Optation*<sup>14</sup> to underline the necessity of establishing cooperative relationships, even with competitors. In this 1996 book, Adam Brandenburger and Barry Nalebuff, professors at the Harvard Business School and the Yale School of Management respectively, assert that business is simultaneously competition and cooperation, and that competitors can benefit each other by cooperating (and sharing costs) in one area while remaining competitors in other areas. One example of this concept in operation is the sharing of component parts between rival auto manufacturers. Health and safety is an issue that competitors from the same sector are generally equally interested in pursuing. While an organization’s health and safety culture can certainly be a competitive advantage, it is impossible to replicate in another organization with different leader personalities, beliefs, and values. Specific areas where collaboration can be mutually beneficial without affecting the overall competitive situation are health and safety best practices and technologies.

## ACTIONS FOR SENIOR LEADERS

In short, the 2009 Leadership Summit identified eight rules senior leaders can follow to improve the health and safety component of a winning culture:

- ◆ View your organization’s health and safety culture as an essential part of your corporate social responsibility, which determines your attractiveness to customers and investors.
- ◆ Treat your employees as assets—not liabilities—to increase engagement and performance.
- ◆ Establish the causal link between healthy, engaged employees and human capital and financial outcomes.

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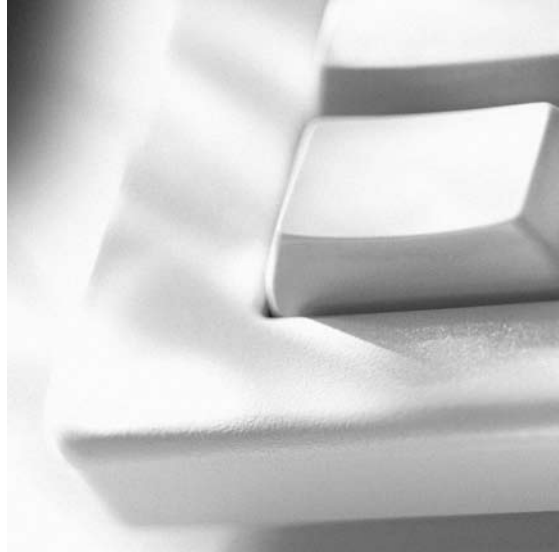
12 Daniel Goleman et al., “Primal Leadership—The Hidden Driver of Great Performance,” *Harvard Business Review*, 2001 [online]. [Cited May 21, 2009.] <http://academy.clevelandclinic.org/Portals/40/HBRPrimalLeadership.pdf>.

13 Tim Sanders, *Saving the World at Work*, p. 146.

14 Adam Brandenburger and Barry Nalebuff, *Co-Optation* (New York: Currency/Doubleday, 1996).

- ◆ Recognize the negative impact of stress and introduce “Googley” programs that—verifiably—reduce stress.
- ◆ Increase awareness of generational identities and design health and safety programs that speak to all generations.
- ◆ Be open to innovative ideas from the “edges” that may provide the solutions to your challenges.
- ◆ Emanate positivity and create an abundance mentality to increase employee confidence.
- ◆ Consider health and safety alliances, not only with your business partners, but also with your competitors.

The Summit came to a close with the signing of the CEO Health & Safety Leadership Charter by Rama First Nation. In his address to the summit, Rick Donato, Health and Safety Manager at Rama First Nation, underlined that his community had achieved a 90 per cent reduction in claim costs over three years, mainly because of a strong and committed leadership that has taken actions to make health and safety as much a part of the workday at Rama as quality, productivity, and service delivery.



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