

# SYMMETRY

People and Process



Balanced for Success

MARKETPLACE EXCELLENCE THROUGH WORKPLACE COMPETENCE

THIRD QUARTER 2003

## ON BALANCE by Andy Hartnett

In the last issue of *Symmetry*, we discussed the first of five key areas needed for a successful consultant relationship, *preparation*. In this issue we're going to explore key areas two and three, *selection* and *activation*. If, after reading this article, you have any questions or comments about the client/consultant relationship, I would enjoy hearing from you. Please call me at 866-270-7306, or e-mail me at [andy@symmetryconsulting.org](mailto:andy@symmetryconsulting.org).

### Key Area #2: Selection

It is critical to establish the business approach, behaviors, skills and expectations associated with success before engaging a consultant. Many consultants may have the necessary knowledge and skills, but their business approach, preferred tools and behaviors may be better suited to a different culture or organizational environment.

The client company needs to recognize that the specific situation, the organizational culture, the project timeline and several other factors are critical to the selection of the right consultant. The consultant affects much more than the project at hand. A consultant will have an effect on a department's reputation, its internal clients' perceptions, its short- and long-term goals, etc. Selecting the best consultant can enhance a department's reputation in many ways.

If your company is entrepreneurial and fast paced, then hiring a consultant who is high-energy, results-focused, and even brash could prove successful. However, this consultant could fail miserably in a more conservative, process-focused and consensus-driven environment. Again, the key is to select a consultant with not only the right skill set, but also the appropriate operating style to help ensure success within your company.

continued on page 3 ... see **On Balance**



## Simple Development Initiatives That Reduce Turnover

A series of simple training and development initiatives helped cruise line Royal Caribbean cut turnover at its Wichita, Kan., call center from 5.3 percent in January 2002 to 2.3 percent last August.

After completing a month-long introductory training course with up to 35 coworkers, many hires felt cast adrift when they were split up from their classmates. Now, call center agents can tap experienced mentors to guide them through their 90-day probationary period.

To keep good agents moving toward supervisory roles, Royal Caribbean also created a group it calls "the core team." New agents can take exams to qualify for the team after just six months on the job. Once they join the group, the workers train rookie agents, staff an internal help line, assist the HR department and help distribute calls between the company's Wichita and Miami centers. In addition to boosting retention, the core team serves as a great stepping stone to the managerial ranks.

- Adapted from "Keeping agents on board," by Joe Fleischer, in *Call Center* magazine.

## Get More from Your Conference Investment

Conferences and seminars are valuable opportunities for your employees to develop their skills and expand their industry knowledge. Make sure they make the most of their time, and your investment, with this tactic: Schedule an appointment to discuss what the employee learned from the conference after his or her return. This will keep the employee focused on learning, and give you an idea of how serious the person is about self-development.

- Adapted from "No more downsized conferences," by Patricia Fripp, on the Multicultural Advantage Web site

## Future FOCUS

Coming in future issues of *Symmetry*:

The Business of Training – Are you a profit or cost center? (seven-part series)

Employee Selection and Retention – Personality a factor?

The Politics of Performance Development

Competencies: Why they are only part of the answer to success?

## TURNOVER

### Understanding the Costs and a Plan to Reduce Them

The costs associated with turnover, at least those that can easily be measured, include advertising the position, screening potential applicants, interviewing prospective employees, overtime pay to cover the vacancy, etc. In addition, there are the administrative hours necessary to process the paper trail as one employee exits and another comes aboard.



Sadly, these costs are just the tip of the iceberg. The true cost of turnover lies in the time between the hiring and the exiting of an employee. In this gray area the company struggles, unaware that either an employee may not be performing optimally for numerous reasons, or a high-performing employee does not feel aligned with the organization.

This preturnover period is where a company can suffer the most. How can we lower the hidden costs associated with preturnover? If your answer is to employ a better hiring process, you are only partially right; once hiring is done, big issues can remain. For example:

- Is the role properly supported by the organization?
- Is the role properly defined by the organization?
- Are the organizations expectations of the role explicit and realistic?
- Is the high-performing employee receiving recognition?
- Is the feedback the employee receives consistent, pertinent and developmental?
- Is the employee able to see how the job links to, and supports, the goals and objectives of the organization?

The continuum of a career covers interview and selection through career advancement and growth. What lies beneath the stages of hiring, development, recognition and growth are the company's (many times unexpressed) expectations of what "good" looks like. In other words, what behaviors are linked with success, support and recognition?

**The preturnover period is where a company can suffer the most.**

Many companies claim to have a different or unique approach to clients, business or research. But when work is being done well, we tend to get murky, high-level competency statements such as loyalty, customer focus, communication skills, risk taking, etc.

The key for most companies is to create a competency and behavior model that answers the question, "What does good look like?"

Fortunately, this task is made much easier thanks to Convergence®.



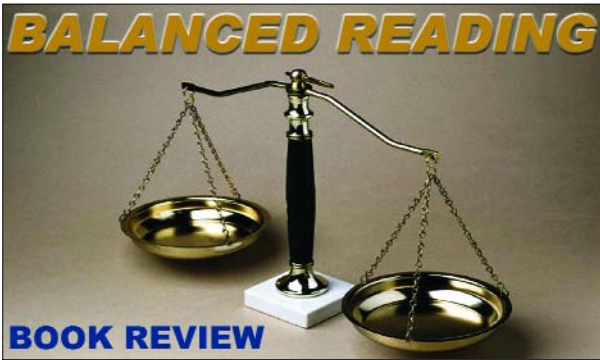
Convergence® is a behavior model created for the development of the individual but designed for the development of the organization. Convergence® is a proven system that provides a common basis and unifying focus for processes in the areas of Human Resources, Training, Performance and Sales Management.

<u>Human Resources</u>	<u>Training</u>	<u>Sales Management</u>
Selection	Training	Evaluation
Annual Appraisal	Learning Material Development	Career Assessment
Career Planning	Learner Support	Recognition
	System/Learner Evaluation	Coaching

#### Does Convergence® work? Here is what one client said.

"Rather than present us with a 'one-size-fits-all' program, Andy spent a great deal of time talking to members of the sales organization. He spoke with senior management about their vision and expectations of the sales teams, with the training and performance group about curriculum and training proficiency, and with members of the sales force about what was currently working to make them successful year in and year out. Andy then helped us create our own vision of 'what good looks like,' respecting our current strengths and culture and aligning the program with senior management's business goals and corporate vision. Andy was able to take us from idea to rollout in a short time frame, given the scope of the project, allowing us to present the new expectations model to the sales force at a major meeting and leaving enough in the budget to expand the program materials. I believe we have a program that is well-accepted by the sales teams as well as upper management because Andy took the time to see and understand our culture, our business and our business needs before beginning any project work."

- Director of performance development & training, Pharmaceutical Company



**SYMMETRY'S RATING: HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**

As managers, we are, or are becoming, aware that coaching is an ever-growing part of our roles as leaders. The coaching texts out there could fill whole libraries, but the authors, Dotlich and Cairo, have created a guide worth making room for on the shelf. Through a thoughtful examination of the individual and the organization, we have been introduced to a coaching model for the individual based on the issues impacting the organization. In other words, through well-planned individual coaching, we can facilitate organizational change. This book is a must for any level of coach. It takes the skills of the coach and weds them with the awareness and vision of change agent. By the end of the text you may feel that it is actually you who has been coached to the next level.



*Action Coaching: How to Leverage Individual Performance for Company Success.* David L. Dotlich and Peter C. Cairo. Jossey-Bass 1999.

## On Balance ... cont. from page 1

### Key Area #3: Activation

Effectively preparing your organization for the consultant's presence is critical. There needs to be a clear understanding of the *why, how, what* and *when* surrounding the consultant's selection, including the goals and objectives set for the consultant. This not only allows you to better prepare the environment for the consultant, it also lets you reinforce your role as the manager and owner of the process.

The environment in which the consultant will operate needs to be "activated." The client must accept the role of advocate and sponsor for the consultant's presence. If the consultant is seen as fulfilling your mission, and there is a well-articulated rationale for his or her presence, the organization itself will help you manage the consultant. For example, if the consultant attempts to meet with others in the organization in a manner or for a reason not in keeping with your purposes, the organization will recognize the out-of-bounds behavior.

In the next issue of *Symmetry*, we'll look at the final key areas needed for a successful consultant relationship, *management* and *review*. If you missed the previous newsletter, which contained key area #1: *preparation*, please contact Symmetry at 1-866-270-7306 for a free copy.

## Auditing the Business of Training ... part 1 of 7

**"There is no point in doing well that which you should not be doing at all." Thomas K. Connellan**

Many times as professionals we find ourselves doing projects that provide little or no organizational value. Or, we accomplish great things but receive little or no recognition or fanfare. We claim it is because our client doesn't understand what our department is designed to do. In reality, it often happens that the training department itself may be the one with the faulty image of training.

Are you

- A) A training professional providing developmental opportunities, or
- B) A business professional charged with the performance support of the company's largest, most-flexible competitive asset?

The difference between the first and second statement is at the very heart of many training department issues. To rephrase our opening quote, "There is no point in doing well that which is not explicitly and creatively linked to the business goals and objectives of the organization."

How many times have we argued that a specific training approach would not work because it didn't make training sense? Only trainers have the vocabulary and references to understand that line of argument. Our clients are business people who need to hear our concerns and feedback in a language they understand. They need to know that our feedback is in direct support of key organizational goals, and not a desire for loftier adherence to a professional training standard. Remember, they became vice-presidents and directors under the old system - why would they change the system that made them successful? As professionals, we cannot abandon our high standards. Therefore, if we wish to be heard and understood, it is imperative that we learn to communicate in clear, concise business terms that everyone understands.



**Balanced for Success**

## Share the Wealth of Intellectual Capital

Intellectual capital is an organization's greatest asset. But how do you get people to share their knowledge with one another? First, managers must understand that knowledge sharing is personal. Help people with the knowledge to feel good about helping out someone else. Here are a couple of strategies to foster such exchanges:

1. Allow teams to consult with one another. Set up a system that allows one team working on a project to call upon another team that has had previous experience with the same type of project. Allow the teams to meet face-to-face for a day or two to work through the challenges facing the less experienced group. That way, those who are called upon to help will feel honored at lending their expertise.
2. Allow top performers to share their knowledge on a monthly basis. Focus each monthly workshop on a particular issue, such as cost control or customer service. Individuals who excel in particular areas can describe their own approach to coworkers and field any questions.
3. Reward knowledge sharers. Build in an incentive - pay or comp time - for people to share their experience and knowledge with their colleagues.

## Building the Foundation of Success ... Moving Beyond Competencies

While the movement toward competencies has been effective in getting organizations to recognize that "training" has changed and is only part of the answer, what's missing?

Organizations that want to reap the benefits of true alignment, tightened focus, enhanced flexibility, consistent feedback and business-driven activity need to go a step further. They must answer the question, "What does good look like?" Then they must capture and embed the answer to that question into their tools, processes and support mechanisms to replicate what good looks like.

This is especially applicable to the international organization striving to find true commonality while recognizing and optimizing the differences in its various constituent markets. Selection, retention, recognition, career assessment, career planning, feedback, annual appraisals, learning and performance systems are all driven from the same source.

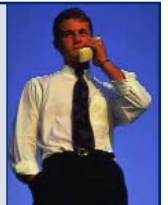
**Mark Your Calendars!** Marcus Evans Conferences has selected Andy Hartnett to present *Building the Foundation of Success-Moving Beyond Competencies*. Andy will be presenting this exciting program on Tuesday, November 18, 2003, in Philadelphia, Pa. For conference information, visit [www.marcusevans.com](http://www.marcusevans.com).

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### Need to Make a Tough Call? Take a Hike!

Head to a park. And bring your cell phone. If you need to make any kind of stressful call - such as ending a relationship with a supplier - go to a place that's relaxing to you, whether a park or a quiet café. The peaceful atmosphere can relieve some of your tension and help you think and speak more clearly.

- Adapted from *Inc* magazine.



A NEWSLETTER DEDICATED TO THE PURSUIT OF MARKETPLACE EXCELLENCE THROUGH WORKPLACE COMPETENCE

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801 Graystone Lane  
Downingtown, PA 19335  
[www.symmetryconsulting.org](http://www.symmetryconsulting.org)