



Ella Kelly

Forum brings practical solutions to employers

submitted by Ella Kelly, Human Resource Advisor, PEIASC

In October, the **PEI Association of Sector Councils** presented its third annual labour market forum entitled *Managing Today's Workforce*. This one-day forum was a great opportunity for employers and managers to learn new and practical solutions to better manage and retain talented workers.

"The previous two forums focused heavily on labour market trends affecting the region and identified challenges that employers would face in the coming years," says **Nancy Johnston**, Executive Director of the PEIASC. "This year we wanted to address issues that business owners and employees are facing right now, and give them the information and tools they need to implement best practices in their workplace."

To achieve this, the forum focused on two major issues facing workplaces today: **generational differences in the workplace** and **building healthy and respectful workplaces**. The format this year consisted of two interactive educational seminars and a mini trade show. Both sessions were fun and interactive, and most importantly, gave employers practical solutions to increase recruitment, retention and productivity within their workplaces.

"The feedback from the day was very positive," says Nancy. "We feel that we achieved our goal and participants left the forum with tips and tools that they could use in their businesses."



Nancy Johnston

Workplace generations - understanding, appreciating, and creating harmony

In today's workplace, up to four generations may be working together. Each generation has distinct characteristics that are noticeable in the workplace, and understanding these differences can be the key to getting the best out of your employees. **Carol Lesbirel** of **Lesbirel Training** in Nova Scotia talked about the different generations in the workplace and how employers can use this information.



Carol Lesbirel

Each generation is shaped by their environment and experiences. This can influence work habits, communication styles, and attitudes towards work and management. Although some individuals may not fit their generational profile exactly, certain general statements can be made about each generational group. Learning about each generation's strengths, challenges and perspective is essential to creating a harmonious work environment and bringing out the strengths of each group.

The Generations

Traditionalists (1922-1946)

Most people in this generation are retired but there are a few still in the workforce. As a group they prefer rules and structure and have a great deal of respect for authority. This generation is motivated by flexible hours, satisfying work and leadership. Their greatest strength in the workplace is perhaps their knowledge and experience. Traditionalists have less experience with technology and may be uncomfortable with computers.

Boomers (1947-1963)

Boomers represent the largest demographic group in today's workforce and many will soon reach retirement age. Carol identifies Boomers as the most indulged of all the generations. They are motivated by money and status, and feel that with hard work one can accomplish anything.

Xers (1964-1980)

This generation grew up in a time when change and instability was the norm. They do not expect to have long careers with the same company. Because the parents of most Xers worked outside the home, they learned to be self reliant, independent and creative. Many people in this generation tend to work best independently rather than in groups. They tend to have post-secondary education and expect decent wages and challenging work.

Millenials (1981-2000)

Many in this generation are not yet in the workforce, but they represent the future of our labour market. This is a group that has grown up with technology and global perspective. They may be well educated, social and confident. Millenials value work/life balance and social time, and tend to be very comfortable with diversity. They enjoy working in teams and working with friends. They will be entering the workforce in the very near future. With their technology experience, positive attitudes and global perspectives, they are geared for action and change.

For more information about the **Labour Market Forum** and the **PEI Association of Sector Councils**, call **892-1515** or visit the website at www.peiasc.ca. Copies of the presentations for this forum are available on the PEIASC website.

About PEIASC: The PEI Association of Sector Councils (PEIASC) is a coordinating body for several provincial sector councils. Sector councils are industry-led organizations that address human resource and labour skills issues in key sectors of the economy.

Creating healthy and respectful workplaces

In today's labour market, employers are faced with a variety of challenges in recruiting and retaining talented workers. Creating a healthy and respectful workplace can significantly increase employee retention, attendance, productivity and morale, all of which are good for your bottom line.

At the forum, **Ellyn Lyle** of **Ceridian Canada Ltd.** discussed the importance of healthy and respectful workplaces and gave employers suggestions for solutions they can implement in their own businesses.



Ellyn Lyle

A healthy workplace is free from harassment and discrimination, encourages respect and is committed to work/life balance. Flexibility is about recognizing that employees have lives outside of the workplace and that work can often easily accommodate other aspects of a person's life. All employees, regardless of age, gender or industry can benefit from a workplace that promotes health, respect and work/life balance.

A healthy and respectful workplace makes good business sense

In the past 10 years, work/life stress has doubled and employee loyalty has declined. Employee absenteeism is at an all-time high. Today, skilled workers are in high demand, and employers will have to work hard to find and keep the best talent. Workers want a workplace that cares about their well-being and offers balance. Businesses that address these needs will be seen as desirable places to work and will attract the best talent.

A healthy workplace is also good for productivity. Healthy workplaces experience lower levels of absenteeism and employee turnover, and enjoy higher levels of productivity.

The cost of creating a healthy workplace is very small compared with the potential costs of an unhealthy workplace. Employee turnover and absenteeism cost businesses a lot of money. The cost to replace one worker can be as much as four times that employee's annual salary. According to Health Canada, the cost of stress-related disorders to the Canadian economy could be as high as **\$16 billion!** By contrast, the cost of addressing workplace health can be little or nothing.

Creating a healthy and respectful workplace

Ellyn and her team suggest a number of simple solutions to address workplace health and create a respectful work environment. These are simple, practical ideas that most businesses can easily implement with little or no cost.

- Learn the signs of stress and burnout, and initiate plans to reduce workplace stress.
- Recognize employee achievements in a creative way. Many workers value time off, and this can be an effective yet simple way to reward good work.
- Be flexible about work hours when possible. Employees will appreciate being able to manage family and other responsibilities as well as their work.
- Respect individual differences and make an effort to have a diverse and inclusive work force.
- Have social events for employees. This offers workers a chance to get to know one another on personal level and to have fun with their co-workers.
- Create a wellness committee to develop a plan that fits your employees and workplace.

