

## CONTENTS

### Case Study.....3

- Shared Vision of the '4 Ps' Helps Create Authentic Organization

### From the Courthouse .....4

- Superior Terminated for Not Reporting Patient Abuse, Employee Misconduct

### The HR Professional.....5

- The Recession Has Impacted Your Employees: How Can You Help?
- Employment Services: Great Resource for People with Disabilities

### Tips & Tactics .....6

- Employers Stepped Up to Protect Employees from H1N1
- A College 'Test Drive' Without Financial Commitment

### Case Study.....7

- Collaborative Environment Increases Employee Engagement, Productivity

### HR Tool Box .....8

- Project Management Tips to Keep on Budget



## Top 10 Strategies for Combating Employee Stress

Workplace stress is a bigger problem than it used to be, and employers have good reason to be more concerned about it than in the past, says Barry Hall, principal at Buck Consultants.

Eighty-two percent of participants in a recent survey reported that their organization's healthcare costs are significantly or moderately impacted by worker stress. In addition, respondents said they have seen a significant or moderate impact on absenteeism (79%) and on workplace safety (77%), according to the survey by Buck Consultants ([www.buckconsultants.com](http://www.buckconsultants.com)), a Xerox Company.

### Proactive Approach

Worker stress levels have increased within the past few years as a result of

economy-related factors, such as layoffs, greater workloads, the need for some employees to work second jobs to make ends meet, and lower household incomes due to family members' lost wages, Hall explains.

In response, many employers are taking steps to help their employees manage stress. In fact, Buck Consultants found that 66% of participants in its "Stress in the Workplace" survey have implemented four or more programs aimed at reducing stress, and 22% have at least eight programs in place.

According to the survey, the top 10 strategies being used by employers to address stress are:

*(continued on page 2)*

## What Can You Learn from High-Performing Companies?

High performing organizations—leaders in their industries—consistently have common characteristics that put them in the top quartile in revenue growth, market share, profitability, and customer satisfaction, explains Jay Jamrog, senior vice president of Research for the Institute for Corporate Productivity (i4cp).

In order to be considered high performing organizations by i4cp, these companies must keep their position in the top quartile for at least 5 years in a row, he notes.

The biggest challenge these organizations face is aligning people with the overall organizational strategy, notes Jamrog. He explains that the organizations, in order to remain competitive and at the forefront of their respective industries, continually evolve their

business strategies to achieve a competitive advantage. They keep employees aligned with organizational strategy, even as it continues to evolve, a common characteristic they achieve better than other organizations.

### High Performance Domains

Jamrog explains that a recent i4cp white paper, "The Five Domains of a High-Performance Organization," describes key human capital domains where high performance organizations outperform their competitors. He summarizes the domains as:

1. Clear and consistent strategies created by company leadership.
2. Leadership that has passion for strategy, good communications, and mirroring the organization's values.

*(continued on page 2)*

### Strategies (continued from page 1)

1. An employee assistance program (78%)
2. Flexible work schedules (63%)
3. Work/life balance support programs (46%)
4. Leadership training on worker stress (45%)
5. Online healthy lifestyle programs (45%)
6. On-site fitness centers (43%)
7. Physical activity programs (38%)
8. Stress awareness campaigns (35%)
9. Financial management classes (30%)
10. Personal health/lifestyle management coaching (29%)

Although offering an on-site fitness center requires a substantial investment, Hall notes that other strategies are not necessarily expensive, such as

incorporating more flexibility into work scheduling and promoting underutilized employee assistance programs that the company is already paying for.

### Significant ROI

Implementing stress management programs makes good business sense because the return on investment (ROI) is high. "It is a business issue for employers," Hall says.

Employers that help employees manage stress tend to experience greater employee productivity, higher morale, lower absenteeism, reduced healthcare costs, lower turnover, fewer accidents, and lower workers' compensation costs, reports Hall.

"Employers increasingly realize they must address the rising tide of employee stress and not just to improve employees' well-being," says Hall.

"Those who ignore stress will take a hit to their bottom line in higher costs and lower productivity."

### Acknowledge Stress

He says employers should not be "afraid" to acknowledge and address workplace stress. "I think there is still a lot of hesitancy to address it or to bring it up [with employees]. A lot of employers realize that they are a key contributor to it."

Even if your employees have relatively stress-free jobs, they might still be dealing with stress caused by factors outside of work, he points out.

Although there is no "magic" number of stress management programs to implement, Hall encourages employers to use as many effective programs as possible, because a program or resource "that works for one employee might not work for another."

### Companies (continued from page 1)

3. Talent aligned to strategy. (Making certain that talent's day-to-day performance is aligned to organizational strategy. Managers and supervisors make sure that their employees understand how their day-to-day activities are important for the company's goals and objectives).
4. Company culture that reinforces strategy. The culture tells people how to behave, and what is rewarded and what is punished within the environment. In high-performing companies, the culture mirrors the strategy. For example, if the strategy is to be more innovative and first in the marketplace, but the culture punishes risk takers, you're never going to reach your goals.
5. External focus on the market. Peter Drucker once said that no great change comes from looking internally. It comes from looking externally. High performing companies understand their position in the

marketplace, understand customer needs, and make sure that even employees that don't interface directly with customers have an understanding of customer needs.

### HR-Specific Characteristics

Jamrog highlights another consistent characteristic of high-performing companies: HR staff seeks employment applicants with excellent attitudes, adaptability, and the willingness to work hard (the "soft characteristics"), while low-performing companies' HR staff seeks skills, competencies, and intelligence. Certainly, high-performing companies' HR staff also seeks skills, competencies, and intelligence, but that is taken a step further, and there is a focus on the soft skills as well.

High-performing companies also show consistent characteristics in HR leadership development. "The best correlation with strong market performance [in high-performing companies] is HR leaders that build strong relationships with people in the organization outside HR," Jamrog explains.

In addition, "HR leaders attend e-learning activities such as online classes and webinars and participate in social media. [They] can gain knowledge very quickly that way. They also attend in-person conferences, finding out what other organizations are doing and participating in networking activities."

Jamrog notes that i4cp's white paper is a "thought paper" and explains what one should be thinking about the following question when reading it. "What can we do at our company to develop these characteristics in all five domains? These characteristics are the ideal."

He says that HR is in the perfect spot to help the organization work toward achieving these domains. "HR should be responsible for this because this is where they can make the most [positive] impact on the organization."

To download the white paper, go to [www.i4cp.com](http://www.i4cp.com), and click on the "white paper download" menu item on the right.

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## Shared Vision of the ‘4 Ps’ Helps Create Authentic Organization

Kahler Slater began a transformation process 15 years ago in which it moved from being an architectural design firm to an interdisciplinary design, planning, and consulting firm—in short, a total experience design firm—explains Jill Morin, co-chief executive officer. She says that the concept of total experience includes “the 4 Ps”: (1) **p**erception—the brand or image in the marketplace; (2) **p**roducts or services—what an organization creates and sells; (3) **p**eople—who make the products or deliver the services; and (4) **p**lace—where the business is done (even if it is a virtual place).

Morin, who is also the author of *Better Make It Real: Creating Authenticity in an Increasingly Fake World*, says that Kahler Slater’s transformation is a process that is based on authenticity and will never be complete and has depended on input and participation from staff since it began.

“It’s the result of providing consistently and over time, an authentic total experience to your stakeholders: employees, customers, vendors, suppliers, and other key business partners,” she explains.

### The Vision

This case study focuses on the 160 employees in Kahler Slater’s six international locations, including Milwaukee, Wisconsin (where 85 of their employees are located), as the stakeholders and participants in moving this transformation process along. Not a simple vision statement, the firm’s vision consists of its core values, purpose, mission, and tangible image (to read it, click on “vision” on the bottom menu at [www.kahlerslater.com/main.html](http://www.kahlerslater.com/main.html)).

The central point is that everyone in the organization participated in the creation and tweaking of this vision, from the co-chief executives to the owners (approximately one-third of staff), to the associates (team leaders), to the employees.

Currently, John Horky, the HR Guy (yes, that’s his real job title), is leading the task of engaging the staff in reviewing and updating the vision. Everyone’s input is requested—and respected.

For example, under the tangible image (“who we are”) section of Kahler Slater’s vision is the description of the people who make up the Kahler Slater staff: “An interdisciplinary team of passionate, creative, diverse, and technologically advanced experts willing to travel the globe to do their work.”

This statement, unique to Kahler Slater, reflects its belief that every organization must endeavor to understand its own culture, products, and staff in order to create the vision that is most appropriate for that organization.

### Product Lines and Passions

Once the first vision description was completed, the company leadership asked the employees what they were passionate about in relation to their work, says Morin. “Some said building typologies, some said sustainability and green design, some said healthcare design, and some of the Marketing Services staff said they were passionate about providing marketing services to clients to help them promote their services,” explains Morin.

Employees’ passions helped the firm expand from offering architectural design to total experience design. Morin explains that the firm allows staff members who are experts in different business categories, product lines, and skills to create business plans regarding new services for which there is a market, but that fit in with the vision for the work the firm does, explains Morin. If the service fits the vision, the plan is incorporated into the firm’s offerings.

“We mentor, provide the support needed, and stay out of the way [of the team] taking care of the business,”

**Who:** Kahler Slater  
**What:** Transformed an architectural firm into a total experience design firm where employees thrive through a company-wide visioning and strategic planning process.

**Results:** In the 10-year period between 1996 and 2006, Kahler Slater’s revenue grew by 175 percent.

Morin says. “If you ask our team leaders [formed around the various services], they’d say that they feel they are entrepreneurs running their own businesses under the common banner and framework or mission that is Kahler Slater.”

### Parting Advice

The most important aspect of this transformation process into an authentic organization is creating and maintaining a shared vision, comments Morin. “When we have to make tough decisions, when we don’t know what to do, our vision is our guide; it’s our North Star. That is what we use as our filter for decision making. It’s walking the talk, acting and living [the vision] on a daily basis. Eighty percent of firms don’t engage in visioning. Visioning is empowering [for employees and leaders].”

Morin comments that one lesson learned along the way since the transformation of Kahler Slater began is that any setbacks that have occurred are related to not communicating clearly enough or often enough. Her advice to HR executives is this: “You can never over-communicate. Sharing appropriate information at the appropriate time with employees is critical.” Horky adds, “This must be coupled with really listening [to employees].”

This entrepreneurial, total experience design vision must be providing an environment where employees thrive. Kahler Slater has been named one of the “25 Best Companies to Work For” 6 years in a row by the Great Place to Work Institute. More significantly, in the 10-year period between 1996 and 2006, Kahler Slater’s revenue grew by 175 percent.



## From the Courthouse

### Supervisor Terminated for Not Reporting Patient Abuse, Employee Misconduct

A Hispanic supervisor terminated for failing to report allegations of patient abuse and employee misconduct filed suit against his former employer alleging race and national origin discrimination.

**What happened.** “Luis,” a Hispanic man of Puerto Rican origin, started working for the Rockland County [NY] Department of Mental Health in February 1996. In November 2004, he was promoted to a low-level supervisory position.

During the same month, a patient accused him of sexual assault. He was suspended with pay. The allegations could not be substantiated, and Luis returned to work.

Luis became the subject of another investigation in June 2005, when two of his female co-workers accused him of sexual harassment. He denied the allegations, but admitted that he had hugged and kissed the women when greeting and saying goodbye to them. He said that the two women sometimes initiated the contact, and he did not realize it made them uncomfortable.

Luis alleged that his accusers and other staff members had engaged in inappropriate behavior in front of other supervisors and patients. He said one of the accusers, “Ruth,” was romantically involved with a patient, but had told a manager that their current relationship was strictly professional.

However, the patient told the Department that he and Ruth were, in fact, in a sexual relationship. Ruth was suspended pending an investigation, but resigned before the investigation occurred.

On October 31, 2005, officials concluded that the sexual harassment allegations against Luis could not be substantiated.

However, the Department charged him with gross misconduct for failure to report allegations of patient abuse and for failure to report inappropriate behavior displayed by his co-workers. He denied both charges.

Meanwhile, a patient reported that Luis had raped her 4 years earlier. The Department contacted the county sheriff’s department, added rape and sexual abuse of a patient to its own charges, and sought Luis’ termination.

After disciplinary hearings, a hearing officer exonerated Luis of the rape and sexual assault charges, but found him guilty of the others. When recommending a 30-day suspension and a written warning, the hearing officer noted that other supervisors and employees were aware of inappropriate conduct but did not act, and that Luis had been “singled out” for punishment.

The Department commissioner decided to terminate Luis. She said his failure to report the sexual relationship was “inexcusable” and disagreed that he had been singled out, since, as a supervisor, he was obligated to report inappropriate conduct.

Luis filed suit against his former employer, alleging race and national origin discrimination in violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment. The district court granted summary judgment to the county. Luis appealed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 2nd Circuit, which covers Connecticut, New York, and Vermont.

**What the court said.** The appeals court affirmed the decision, saying that Luis did not demonstrate that he had been discriminated against (i.e., he did not identify “a similarly situated employee who faced equally

## THE LAW

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act makes it unlawful for an employer of 15 or more employees to refuse to hire, discharge, or take action affecting an employee’s compensation, terms, conditions, or privileges of employment because of the employee’s race or national origin.

Employers are prohibited from basing employment decisions on racial stereotypes or assumptions about abilities, traits, or performance of members of a particular race. Segregating or classifying employees based on these protected characteristics is also prohibited under Title VII.

serious allegations” and was allowed to remain on the job).

Luis claimed that three employees (Ruth, a supervisor, and the manager who had questioned Ruth about her relationship with the patient) had committed the same or more serious misconduct, but were not disciplined.

The court noted that Ruth resigned before the department could investigate and that, although the supervisor was aware of inappropriate behavior, he did not see—and was not accused of participating in—such behavior (unlike Luis). According to the court, the manager “satisfied her duty by meeting with” Ruth to ask about her relationship with the patient.

In addition, the court noted that none of those three employees was accused of sexual harassment, sexual abuse, and rape. *Ruiz v. County of Rockland, et al.* U.S. Court of Appeals for the 2nd Circuit, No. 09-0759-cv, (6/25/10).

### WHAT TO REMEMBER

- **Investigate complaints.** In this case, Rockland County officials promptly investigated complaints of sexual harassment, sexual assault, and rape lodged against Luis. When a manager heard second-hand information that Ruth was in a sexual relationship with a patient, she also looked into the matter.
- **Hold supervisors accountable.** The department disciplined Luis for not meeting his obligation to report allegations of patient abuse and employee misconduct to supervisors.

## The Recession Has Impacted Your Employees: How Can You Help?

The “Great Recession,” as the Pew Research Center refers to it, may be affecting your employees more than you realize. A national survey conducted by the Pew Research Center found that 55% of adults in the labor force say that since the Great Recession began over 2 years ago, they have suffered a spell of unemployment, a cut in pay, a reduction in hours, or have become involuntary part-time workers.

This means that even if your employees have not personally been affected by any reductions in force or reduced work schedules within your organization, it’s probably likely that someone in their household has, which in turn, will impact your employees as well.

A few details taken out of the survey report, conducted through telephone interviews among 2,967 currently employed respondents, follow:

- Work hours reduced—28%
- Pay cut—23%

- Had to take unpaid leave—12%
- Forced to switch to part-time—11%

According to the executive summary of the survey, released on June 30, 2010, “The recession has led to a new frugality in Americans’ spending and borrowing habits, a diminished set of expectations about their retirements and their children’s future, and a concern that it will take several years, at a minimum, for their family finances and house values to recover.”

Also, 54% of survey respondents said that the U.S. economy is still in a recession; 41% believe that it is beginning to come out of it; and only 3% said the recession is over.

According to the report, 48% of the respondents said they are in worse financial shape now than before the recession began. Federal government data back that up with statistics that show average household wealth falling by about 20% from 2007 to

2009, largely due to declining house values and retirement account values.

“This is the biggest meltdown in U.S. household wealth in the post-World War II era,” states the report. “Of those who say their family finances have lost ground during the Recession, 63% say it will take at least 3 years to recover.”

In addition, the report notes, “nearly one-third (32%) of adults now say that they are not confident that they will have enough income and assets to finance their retirement.”

When thinking about educational programs being planned for your staff, topics such as financial management, retirement planning, and stress-reduction techniques probably should be at the top of the list. In addition, remind your staff about the availability of employee assistance program services in the event that they could use counseling or advice.

The entire survey report (a 118-page PDF) is available for download at no cost. Go to <http://pewsocialtrends.org/assets/pdf/759-recession.pdf>.

## Employment Services: Great Resource for People with Disabilities

CareerOneStop employment services, which are available in most states and online under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), can be beneficial resources for people with disabilities receiving assistance from the Social Security Administration who become ready for work.

A recent report prepared by Mathematica Policy Research (MPR), Inc., under contract with DOL’s Employment and Training Administration, found that a federally funded initiative at the state level, the Disability Program Navigator initiative (DPN) in OneStop service locations, has reported a measure of success.

Although only 2% to 4% of all OneStop users receiving DPN funding were Social Security

Disability Insurance (SSDI) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) beneficiaries at the time that they registered for OneStop services, the services were a valuable resource for beneficiaries ready to look for employment.

“When we considered the number of SSA beneficiary OneStop users as a percentage of all SSA beneficiaries with work-related goals and expectations (work-oriented beneficiaries) actively pursuing employment, we found that OneStop users represented a substantial share of these beneficiaries, particularly in Colorado and Iowa (26%),” according to the report. “SSA beneficiaries who used OneStop services and became employed achieved rather exceptional employment outcomes relative to SSA beneficiaries nationally.”

The report, “Evaluation Report on the Number of Social Security Disability Beneficiaries Being Served by the OneStops in Four DPN States,” did not draw specific conclusions about the impact of the DPN initiative on OneStop service use due to data collection variations and data availability.

However, it is clear that SSI and SSDI beneficiaries who are work-ready are using OneStop services online ([www.careeronestop.org](http://www.careeronestop.org)) and/or local offices in states ([www.servicelocator.org](http://www.servicelocator.org)).

OneStop centers are a good resource for employers seeking to hire more individuals with disabilities.

The full 71-page report is available at <http://tinyurl.com/22mwd65>.

# Tips & Tactics

## Employers Stepped Up To Protect Employees From H1N1

Last flu season, U.S. employers implemented a number of measures in trying to protect staff from potential H1N1 flu outbreaks, according to the results of a national poll of employees conducted by the Harvard Opinion Research Program at the Harvard School of Public Health (HSPH).

For example, 81% of the 1,491 employees surveyed reported that their companies provided hand sanitizer to prevent the spread of H1N1 in the workplace. And most (60%) reported that their company encouraged them to get the H1N1 vaccine. The largest employers, those with 500 or more employees, were more likely than medium (100 to 499 employees) or smaller (20 to 99 employees) companies to do this (66% versus 54% and 46%, respectively), according to the report.

A majority of employees (77%) said that their company provided them with information about how to keep H1N1 flu from spreading between employees at the workplace. More than a third of employees said that their company provided them with information about changes to leave policies that would make it easier for them to stay home from work because they were sick (42%), because a family member was sick (38%), or because their children's school was closed (36%).

"Businesses can be a vital public health partner with health authorities during an outbreak [of flu or other contagious medical problems]," said Gillian K. Steelfisher, research scientist in the HSPH Department of Health Policy and Management and a member of the polling team. "Public health officials at federal, state, and local levels should develop plans that specifically bring educational

materials and preventive measures into the workplace."

### Resources for Employers

Employers can also review information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and its special section on its website for Workplace Safety and Health ([www.cdc.gov/workplace](http://www.cdc.gov/workplace)), which includes topic areas such as Workplace Hazards, Workplace Illnesses, Injuries & Health Disorders, Workplaces and Occupations, and Workplace Safety & Prevention.

The HSPH website also offers a wealth of information for employers concerned about their employees' health. Its Nutrition Source, for example, includes advice to assist readers in eating healthier foods.

Written in a clear, no-nonsense style, some of the general advice from The Nutrition Source ([www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/index.html](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/index.html)) follows. "Eat a plant-based diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains; choose healthy fats, like olive and canola oil; and eat red meat and unhealthy fats, like saturated and trans fats, sparingly. Most important of all is keeping calories in check, so you can avoid weight gain, which makes exercise a key partner to a healthy diet."

### A College 'Test Drive' Without Financial Commitment

Many people, including your employees, may wonder whether going to college will help them achieve a better job or help them increase their value to their organization. Some of those people may find it difficult to fit traditional weekly or twice-weekly class schedules into their already busy lifestyles.

Such individuals may do well learning in an online college environment

since it is more flexible, but they may be unsure as to whether the online classroom environment is a good match for their learning style. Test Drive College Online (TDCO) offers individuals the opportunity to try out online college courses without a commitment or paying a fee.

"For many people, online education is unfamiliar territory and they hesitate to take advantage of the opportunities it provides because they are not sure if it is right for them," said Richard Capezzali, executive VP of EducationDynamics and creator of TDCO. "Through Test Drive College Online, employees can test the water before diving in, so they can be confident that they'll be able to succeed before using any of their continuing education benefits."

According to TDCO, a 2009 study by SHRM found that 95% of surveyed HR professionals say that tuition assistance may be used for either traditional or online universities. The same study noted that most respondents found that individual courses taken online are equally credible (from a hiring perspective) compared with traditional university courses.

To take advantage of the test drive opportunity, prospective students must pass a College Competency Exam first that gauges a student's aptitude through freshman-level English and math questions, according to a statement from TDCO. The student may enroll in either Introduction to Psychology or English Composition I, courses that many colleges require.

The courses have been evaluated and approved by the American Council on Education (ACE) so that students who pass a TDCO course may apply to transfer those credits to any ACE member school.

For additional information, visit [www.testdrivecollegeonline.com](http://www.testdrivecollegeonline.com).

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## Collaborative Environment Increases Employee Engagement, Productivity

Two years ago, some TPG Direct employees did not know whom to turn to for advice; in fact, some did not even know who their manager was, says Julia Missaggia, PHR, Human Resources manager. There was little collaboration among employees, and employee engagement and satisfaction levels were low.

HR responsibilities at TPG Direct ([www.tpgdirect.com](http://www.tpgdirect.com)), a Philadelphia-based, full-service direct marketing agency, had fallen onto the shoulders of a semiretired office manager who had not been trained in employment law. But things started to change in the fall of 2008 after the agency hired a new CEO who is a “strong believer” that employees are the agency’s most valuable asset, according to Missaggia.

Missaggia, who started at TPG Direct in March 2009, worked with an HR consultant to identify and address HR-related compliance issues and then implement strategies to increase communication between employees and HR.

### Open Communication

The agency performed both a Fair Labor Standards Act audit and a file audit. Within her first 3 months on the job, Missaggia interviewed each of the agency’s 50 employees to gain a better understanding of each individual’s role, determine the strengths and weaknesses of the company and each department, and identify “what needed to be fixed.”

Missaggia continues to meet with every employee four times a year to discuss any problems, seek input about upcoming changes, and talk about development opportunities.

She also started one-on-one coaching for managers as needed and introduced “coffee talks,” informal conversations with “randomized groups of employees” from different departments. Coffee talks, which initially took place twice per month but are now scheduled monthly, provide a

forum for employees to vent frustrations, learn about other departments, and provide feedback to the agency, she says.

Based on employee input in coffee talks, TPG Direct started celebrating employee birthdays, increased transparency and communication, and increased the number of paid holidays (from 5 to 15 days), Missaggia reports.

A monthly mandatory agency meeting now provides opportunities for the CEO to update employees about the business and for the agency to convey its vision to employees, discuss changes in benefits or other HR-related issues, acknowledge accomplishments, and encourage employees to ask questions, she says.

In addition, “Refreshment Fridays” give employees a chance to mingle with their colleagues in other departments during the last hour of every workweek.

Employees appreciate the open communication, Missaggia says. “Now they feel like they know what’s going on in the company.” She reports employees are more engaged, satisfied, and efficient in their jobs. “They feel valued now. They know that we care about them now.”

### More Efficient Workspaces

TPG Direct also revamped its office space and upgraded technology to create a more collaborative work environment. In the past, there was only one conference room, and many employees were assigned to individual offices “that were way too large” for one person, according to Missaggia.

The agency removed most of the 6-foot-tall cubicles, constructed walls to create office space that accommodates two to three employees, and paired employees with the co-workers they most frequently collaborate with—eliminating the need for some employees to walk to another floor in the building to work together, she

**Who:** TPG Direct  
**What:** Created a collaborative work environment.  
**Results:** Increased employee engagement, satisfaction, and efficiency.

says. In addition, five conference rooms were built, giving employees space to proof materials, hold impromptu or scheduled meetings, or have a private phone conversation.

The agency purchased new desks and chairs that are “physically and ergonomically more comfortable,” added a television to each conference room for presentations and webinars, switched to a new digital phone system (the speaker phone function did not work on the old analog system), trained employees on using Microsoft Outlook® so they can schedule meetings more easily, and upgraded all employees to the same Microsoft Word® package so they would no longer have trouble sharing files.

TPG Direct purchased new iMac® computers for its design department and started switching the rest of its workforce to laptops, enabling employees to bring their laptops to the conference room. Every new hire is now issued a laptop, and the agency buys laptops for existing employees when they need new computers, she says.

The new office configuration encourages collaborative work and makes employees more efficient, Missaggia maintains.

### What to Do

When working to create a collaborative work environment, Missaggia recommends seeking input from employees about the types of changes that would be meaningful to them and creating a plan that reflects employees’ needs and the corporate culture. “For every employee and every company, that’s going to be different.”

She also says it is important to introduce new programs slowly. “If you do too much at once, the value of each individual thing you are doing might get lost.”

# HR Tool Box

## Project Management Tips to Keep on Budget

With companies using cost cutting as a way to weather the economic downturn, it is prudent to look at project management as a way to keep expenses down and productivity up. By monitoring progress, adjustments can be made to help projects stay on timeline—and budget. Remember to keep project team members informed of any suggestions or changes.

### Managing Multiple Projects

- Appoint a coordinator to supervise each project.
- Meet frequently with project coordinators.
- Prioritize your involvement so that you deal only with the most important issues.
- Build in extra milestones to make it easier for you to keep an eye on progress and make sure that each project stays on schedule.
- Conduct frequent project reviews, requiring project coordinators to keep you posted on schedules, costs, quality control issues, personnel issues, performance problems, etc.



### Managing Staff that Doesn't Normally Report to You

- Ask for a clear determination of authority.
- Get the support of other managers.
- Devote more time to teambuilding.
- Step up communication.
- Rely on your negotiation and conflict management skills to solve staffing problems.
- Be prepared to remove uncooperative people.

### Managing Projects That Involve Major Challenges Or Something New

- Search the organization for expertise.
- Seek information and advice from outside.
- Spend more time on the planning phase of the project to make sure you've accounted for everything.
- Allow extra time in the schedule.
- Account for unanticipated needs in your budget such as more funding or additional staff.
- Experiment on a small scale, if possible, before launching the full project.

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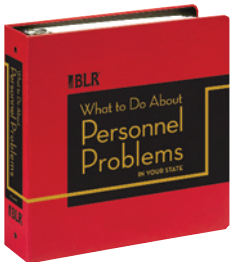
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