

CYNTHIA'S BOOK REVIEW FOR BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS

Here are five major trends that will mold the success or failure of business organizations in the future:

- *Longevity* - People are living longer.
- *More varied household types* - Family composition is changing.
- *Generations* - Multiple generations now work together.
- *Diversity* - Our daily world is becoming more complex.
- *Trust, respect and ethics* - Everyone wants to be respected.

In *The New Workforce*, by Harriet Hankin, these trends provide useful insight for guiding decision makers and employers towards understanding their employees' expectations. Hankin's research sources are from her personal experience and from libraries, the Internet, interviews, case studies, and business experiences.

Part One describes the trends:

Longevity

The new mortality tables have increased the ultimate life expectancy to 120.5 years! The new "seniors" are staying active and striving to live well for a longer period of time. Participation of individuals 65 years and older in the work force has been steadily climbing over the last decade.

More Varied Household Types

In the year 2000 traditional families (i.e., two opposite sex parents with children under the age of 18) made up 23% of all households. Now we're accustomed to female heads of households and common law marriages. New family models include senior domestic partners, same sex couples with or without children, grandparents as primary guardians, and single father households. The latter is the fastest growing segment of new households.

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(from the previous side)

Generations

Up to four generations work side by side. Each has its own set of gifts and complexities stemming from the era in which they were raised. They do, however, share a basic desire for individual dignity.

Diversity

Race, ethnicity, abilities, age, sexual orientation are all the more common aspects of diversity. Hankin adds two more: 1) the intermarrying of second and third generation immigrants that leads to a blending of cultures, values, and traditions, and 2) the importance of moving beyond hiring diverse employees to a work environment that sincerely promotes the acceptance and respect of differences.

Trust, Respect, and Ethics

People want a higher purpose in life. A 1999 Gallup report stated that 78% of Americans felt a need to grow spiritually. What's amazing is that this same poll conducted in 1994, just five years earlier, indicated that only 20% of Americans felt that way. Baby Boomers striving to leave their legacy, growing environmental awareness, and a realization that some of the answers to life's questions are not going to be found among science are the three factors that influence this trend. The benefits of having a workplace that has trust, respect, and ethics as its foundation include enhanced productivity, reduced turnover, and a healthier financial performance.

Part Two explores the anticipated impact of these trends on Human Resource policies and practices:

Some of the cutting edge ideas are no set work schedules, cafeteria style compensation, and life-stage based benefits. Hankin offers that the formula for meaningful HR policies and practices in the future will center around flexibility, respect, and lots of communication.

Reading this book is a way to prepare for the future. Knowledge plus action can definitely help determine what type of future an organization will have.

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