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MANAGING THE CANADIAN CULTURAL COMMUNITY'S
VERY HUMAN, HUMAN RESOURCES

Some intriguing and exciting trends are emerging in the Canadian cultural community, centered around the development, performance and management of our industry's business and creative talent, particularly within the broadcast sector. Recently, the Cultural Human Resources Council (CHRC) played a leadership role by hosting "Strategy 21", a national HR Forum designed to bring together cultural workers, industry leaders and government officials to discuss HR issues and trends, and lay the strategy for dealing with these over the next five years.

As early as year's end, 2001, Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC)'s Annual Report on Employment Equity stated that "Canada was not competing at its full potential because ...it was not retaining and utilizing her own highly qualified human resources". A year later, the CHRC's study on sector practices reported, among other key findings, on the need for a Pan-Canadian cultural HR strategy, which addresses "an under-developed knowledge base in HR matters".

In fairness, who's had time? Recent years have seen our sector struggle with the effects of consolidation and re-organization, and unpredictable business cycles causing large-scale management displacement, most recently seen in mass layoff at Alliance Atlantis Communications' production division. Yet, through these truly difficult circumstances, there has emerged a concerted focus, particularly on the part of broadcasters, towards the development and retention of winning teams and practical knowledge management. On the talent side, culture, media and broadcast workers are showing a marked increase in accountability for the management of their careers, greater efforts toward knowledge acquisition and respect for cultural fit, and an increased focus on contributions to the betterment of both the organizations and the industry they serve.

Candidate sourcing and assessment remain a serious challenge, the greatest of these in dealing with the administrative burden of seemingly unlimited candidacies. Some broadcasters report software screening packages as being effective. Yet, such screening software tends to only focus on hard skills and may negate less tangible but equally influential factors such as professional development efforts and histories of public service. Similarly, the all-encompassing job description may ultimately screen out individuals who may be missing only a small portion of the skill base required. Looking instead at developmental task performance, successful track records and good citizenship might serve our industry better in building teams with the right fit from the onset. Further, the hiring process is becoming much more protracted: fit with existing teams is critical, and more stakeholders at varying levels are being brought into, and consequently lengthening, the screening process. Additional training in recruitment and interviewing skills could provide greater consistency and objectivity across future hires. Encouragingly, practical knowledge management by way of development and retention of high potential/high performance employees is gaining ground, with companies such as Rogers and Alliance Atlantis consistently seeking innovative solutions in knowledge acquisition and training. Respect for the gains to the workforce in valuing diversity is also on the rise, with companies such as Craig Broadcasting Systems, Pelmorex and VisionTV establishing industry benchmarks in the achievement of representative and equitable workforces.

More encouraging still, our talent base is showing increased accountability for the management of their careers and targeted portfolio marketing. Individuals are taking advantage of slowdowns in the marketplace to invest in themselves through continuing education and knowledge acquisition, and more still are turning their efforts towards contributions to, and achievements in, public service. Cultural agencies and professional associations supporting our community have responded to the demand, and abound with professional development initiatives - which our talent base is keenly and wisely consuming. Career pro-activism now includes identifying developmental competencies and needs, as well as developing complimentary knowledge bases and social equity. Culture and media workers are also showing greater understanding of the need for cultural fit, and are seeking and valuing opportunities accordingly, packaging, presenting and promoting their skills more adeptly to matching job and public service opportunities. A double benefit results in greater visibility and advancement through concrete successes, as well as in contributing



more effectively to our beleaguered industry, our product, and ultimately our economy. At the highest end of the continuum, there are those who are succession planning their own jobs. Language skills are in great demand, and serious deficiencies remain in fluency in our official languages. Many of our culture workers are conversationally bilingual but would benefit more competitively in the marketplace by upgrading their French and other language skills.

The CHRC's national HR forum, addressing in depth the sharing of best practices in cultural human resource management, took place in late November, in Toronto. Small market broadcasters and the independent production community are encouraged to take advantage of the CHRC's excellent Human Resources Management tools and publications, available online in the new year. Our industry will also soon benefit from the findings of the CAB's Taskforce for Cultural Diversity in Television, which will help define issues and offer practical initiatives towards increasing diversity in the workplace. With the caliber of individuals involved in these efforts, and the national scope of the research, our cultural talent will undoubtedly be looking at very constructive and encouraging steps forward in 2004. Intriguing and exciting indeed, for broadcasters and talent alike: setting and meeting new standards in the business of Canadian content creation.

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