



PASS THE BATON LLC

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2010 MCDA Careers Conference

Manage the Upcoming Brain Drain: Identify, Capture & Transfer Mission-Critical Information

One hour to introduce transformational ideas

Susan Gainen

A note to HR Professionals: Whether you work with 18-year-olds, displaced homemakers, grad students, the newly unemployed or the chronically underemployed, your clients are ultimately responsible for making their way in the world. Their success will be tied to the mission-critical information that they acquire and their understanding of how their employers' value that information.

INTRODUCTION & DEFINITIONS

- A. Mission-critical information is held by owners, managers, employees, volunteers, presidents, clerical staff, leaders, administrative assistants, counselors, committee chairs, janitors, mail-room workers, and everyone else who works or volunteers for an organization. [The missing constituency is "customers," but their opinions and concerns are beyond the scope of this hour.]
- B. "Manager" and "Owner" encompass "Director," "Department Head" and every other leadership position or category. "Business" encompasses non-profit, for profit, public, and private entities, departments, committees, working groups, volunteer organizations, and any other ongoing entity.

THE HEART OF THE MATTER FOR MANAGERS

- A. It is midnight: where is your mission-critical information?
- B. What Demographics – beyond Boomers' impending retirement -- should keep you up at night?
- C. Where is my data? Mission-critical information can be in physical places, in the ether, in the cloud or in someone's brain.
- D. What information? Facts, law, statistics, changes to strategic plans, interpretations of processes, culture, history, gossip?

BENEFITS & PROBLEMS INHERENT IN STRUCTURED MISSION-CRITICAL INFORMATION GATHERING

A. Benefits to managers

- 1. You get the information that is locked in employees' brains, residing in their memories, and imprinted on activities that they have repeated year after year after year.
- 2. You get to conduct a fresh-eye review all of your business' functions, regardless of how "important."
- 3. You get to have your employees share their visions of your business and your business plan.
- 4. You get to tap into long-term employees' desire to create a legacy.
- 5. You get to identify and eliminate half-turkey tasks.
- 6. You get to tap purported "deadwood" and ask what they really want to do? [Don't assume that they want to be deadwood.]
- 7. You get to tap into the creativity of your employees.

B. Problems for managers

- 1. Employees' fear that sharing information with you will make them redundant, leading to dismissal.
- 2. Employees' fear that managers really don't want to hear their opinions.
- 3. Employees' fear that they will be discovered to lack technical skills and/or full understanding of their jobs.
- 4. Managers' fear that you will find out that some of employees are neither working up to their potential nor really working full-time which will reflect on your work as the manager.

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Susan Gainen / Page 2

C. Push-back scenarios

1. You don't really want my opinion.
2. We've always do things this way.
3. I don't want to be critical...
4. Sharing information is a waste of time.
5. Sharing information with people at all levels is inappropriate.

SOLUTIONS FOR MANAGERS

- A. Create safe structures and processes to collect and share information that demonstrates benefits to both managers and staff.
- B. Create a no-holds' barred but-polite culture for group meetings to discuss projects and processes.

STARTING POINTS FOR ANALYZING MISSION-CRITICAL INFORMATION

Starting points: *Each organization's pivot point will be different, and unraveling your organization's projects, processes, and structures may be like untangling a skein of yarn that has been a cat toy for a week. EXAMPLES:*

- A. How is your organization's year structured?
- B. How are your projects managed?
- C. How are your budgets managed?
- D. How do people and departments collaborate?
- E. How do people and departments share information?
- F. How is technology used and evaluated?
- G. How are job descriptions created and how are employees evaluated?

FOR HR PROFESSIONALS COUNSELING CLIENTS & MANAGERS

- A. **For Clients:** Know what your organization does and how your work fits into it. Understand what your boss does and what your colleagues do because you may be called on to fill a job at a moment's notice.
- B. **For Managers:**
 - a. While much of the information shared around the pop machine is incorrect, skewed, or misconstrued a lot of it is absolutely correct. None of it is in your control.
 - b. Managers must encourage a culture of sharing and allocate resources to capture mission-critical information before chronologically employees of all generations take it with them.

A JOB DESCRIPTION IS NOT ENOUGH

A job description is neither a training tool nor a transmitter of office culture or history, and not a substitute for systematic and conscientious capture of mission-critical information.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

<http://www.workforce.com/> Workforce Management

When Generations Collide: Who They Are. Why They Clash. How to Solve the Generational Puzzle at Work. Lynne C. Lancaster, David Stillman, 2002 (still the best book on communicating across generations)

<http://tcbmag.blogs.com/generations/>

The misunderstood Gen-X manager:

http://blogs.hbr.org/hbr/hbreditors/2010/04/the_misunderstood_gen_x_manager.html

Sample Google search terms: managing generation shift, organizational management, change management, organizational development, boomer exodus, Gen-X managers