

Columnist: _____



by Shawnee LOVE

What the Best have in Common

Happy employees make for profitable companies

The Top 100 workplaces in Canada list in 2010 can be viewed online at www.canadastop100.com/national/. It was done from the perspective of judges who evaluated the applicants in eight criteria:

- ♦ *Physical Workplace;*
- ♦ *Work Atmosphere & Social;*
- ♦ *Health, Financial & Family Benefits;*
- ♦ *Vacation & Time Off;*
- ♦ *Employee Communications;*
- ♦ *Performance Management;*
- ♦ *Training & Skills Development; and,*
- ♦ *Community Involvement.*

These 100 lucky organizations get to put the badge of honour on their websites and tell anyone who cares (e.g., current and future employees, customers, and suppliers) how they earned this honour.

After many years of trying to create great places to work (enhancing the success of businesses along the way) and at least six years of following Canada's Top 100, it is clear to me these organizations are linked in a number of ways.

They spend money (to make money)

As a business consultant, I like it when my for-profit clients make money. As an entrepreneur who makes a living delivering solutions for the people, systems, culture side of businesses, I know that enthusiastic, inspired employees in an adaptable, energized, collaborative, values-based and performance-focused environment will stay longer, work harder, be healthier, and give greater effort and service to the company and their customers.

Great service and quality products generally mean customers buy more, which leads to bigger profits.

Companies in Canada's Top 100 are willing to spend money on the systems, culture and people to create the service/product that customers will love so profits will follow. Of the Top 100 this year, 32 have great monetary rewards on top of wages, which includes signing bonuses, year end bonuses (tied to performance of course), project success bonuses, etc. They also offer profit sharing, and in this economy, if a

company is generating enough profits to share, something must be working!

They develop their employees

Given the judging was done in 2010 with all the intrigue of unstable economies, revenue decreases and belt tightening, it is encouraging to know that 82 of the companies in the top 100 list didn't stop developing their employees when times got tough. They continued to provide training and education subsidies and/or have in house training initiatives designed to not only make employees better at their jobs, but also to help them prepare for their future roles within the company. This makes sense to me, because employees perceive training and development as a reward.

Ongoing learning is a key driver for employees across all generations and a significant reason behind why employees join and remain with companies.

Easy to be loyal

Ninety of the companies top up maternity and parental leave in addition to what the parent receives from Employment Insurance. Additionally, 19% of the companies offer daycare, kids camps and educational support for their employees' children.

If you are thinking there are huge costs and hoops to jump in order to set up a daycare, you would be right, but if parents know their children are close at hand and safe, and they can pop in during lunch, those parents have less guilt eating away at them, they have more focus on their job and are happier.

Happy people work harder and perform better than their unhappy counterparts. Scientists haven't figured out why that is, but they know it is true.

Seventy-one offer some form of retirement savings plan that builds wealth for their employees in the long term. Employee retention has been getting much attention recently from the C Suite because we are increasingly able to measure the average cost of losing an employee to the tune of 50-100% of one year's salary if we factor in recruiting and training costs, intervening slowdowns or downtime, overtime and additional burden on remaining team members, stress, loss of knowledge and experience.

They know an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Twenty-eight of the companies offer flexible work arrangements and extra time off and 35 of the companies offer additional vacation and vacation "purchase plans" or

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top ups to ensure people get the time away from work they need to take care of their personal lives.

Many (44) also offer beautiful work environments (not nasty grey cubicles with old carpets), and perks such as trips, tickets to activities and events, access to fitness facilities and gym memberships.

What also interests me about these companies is that they are all very different, proving to me that every organization is as individual as the people that inhabit it. Off the shelf solutions don't work and you can't simply copy the Top 100 to ensure you get the same results. Asking your employees what they want and need to be happier at work is a great way to get started. In fact, many of the Top 100 companies do that too. **OBE**

By Shawnee Love of Love HR. If you want to read more about HR for the real world, visit www.lovehr.ca/blog.
