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**Project Ask: A Satisfaction Survey of South Carolina  
Department of Social Services Federal pilot program Access  
and Visitation**

*MAHALIAH-BOWMAN-CAMPBELL*

Director of Visitation, Involvement, Parenting Program

Colleton County Department of Social Services

216 S. Lemack Street

Walterboro, SC 29488

Phone: 843-549-1894, ext. 185

E-mail: [Mcampbell@dss.state.sc.us](mailto:Mcampbell@dss.state.sc.us)

Project Paper

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**Project Ask: A Satisfaction Survey of South Carolina  
Department of Social Services Federal pilot program Access  
and Visitation**

**Introduction:**

Five years ago, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services<sup>1</sup>, Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE), pursuant to the authority granted to it by Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, also known as the “Welfare Reform Act,” provided grants to States for Child Access and Visitation Programs.

The purpose of the Access and Visitation grants is to establish and administer programs to support and facilitate non custodial parents’ access to and visitation of their children, by means of activities including mediation, counseling, education, development of parenting plans, visitation enforcement (including monitoring supervision and neutral drop-off and pickup), and development of guidelines for visitation and alternate custody arrangements.

Pursuant to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Child Support Enforcement, South Carolina Department of Social Services (SCDSS), in September 1998 invited each of its county offices and OCSE offices’ to submit a proposal to develop a program to provide access and visitation to non-custodial parents. Two divisions of the SCDSS submitted proposal and was awarded funds to begin the South Carolina Access and Visitation Pilot Program for non-custodial parents and the statewide initiative. One pilot demonstration program is operated by the OCSE in one urban and one rural county (Richland and Kershaw respectively). The other program is

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<sup>1</sup> United States Department of Health and Human Services, Access and Visitation

operated by the SCDSS' office in a rural county (Colleton). The statewide initiatives include the development of information, education and training resources (brochures, curricula, videos, ect.), and the development of a network of public and private programs involved with access and visitation issues and services.

The intent of both Colleton County and Columbia II OCSE programs is to assist parents to develop the skills, relationship and parenting plans necessary to raise their children in a cooperative environment. The services that are provided through the two programs include: 1) cooperative parenting classes for custodial and non-custodial parents; 2) mediation services to establish parenting plans; and 3) enforcement services when parenting plans are not adhered.

In October 2000, the SCDSS contracted with Policy Studies Inc.<sup>2</sup> (PSI) to conduct an independent evaluation of the two access and visitation programs the State has funded with support from Federal Office of OCSE. State staffs have considered implementing similar programs in other counties and thus are interested in assessing the effectiveness of the two existing program and identifying their merits and limitations. As part of that process, PSI designed an evaluation to achieve the following objectives:

- ❖ Document and describe the operations of the two existing access/visitation programs;
- ❖ Analyze the strengths of and challenges facing the program;
- ❖ Assess the degree to which the existing programs achieved the objectives outlined in the State's application for federal funding;
- ❖ Discuss their evaluation finding and the implications of those finding for implementing the program in other counties; and

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<sup>2</sup> Policy Studies Inc. VIP Strength and Weaknesses, section 3-2

- ❖ Make their recommendations for enhancing and refining the programs to improve service delivery.

Meanwhile, Colleton County DSS pilot Access and Visitation program, which was re-names Visitation, Involvement, Parenting program (VIP) also completed an evaluation to address the issues of the 1998 Family Support Act (P.L. 100-485)<sup>3</sup>: The 1988 FSA authorized state demonstration projects to "...develop, improve, or expand activates designed to increase compliance with child access provisions of court orders", and to promote improvements in existing procedures or the development of new methods and techniques to resolve child access and visitation problem. Also, the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) P.L. 104-193<sup>4</sup>: This legislation authorized state grants to "... establish and administer programs to support and facilitate non-custodial parents' access to and visitation of their children". Activities specifically covered by the legislation included: (1) mediation (voluntary and mandatory), (2) counseling, (3) education (4) development of parenting plans, (4a) development of visitation guidelines and alternative custody arrangements, and (5) visitation enforcement services, including monitoring, supervised visitation, and neutral pick-up and drop-off. Specifically, to evaluate the services, a survey was conducted to formal parents, who received services from VIP, CCDSS staff, Family Court, OCSE office and attorneys,

*" Does the Visitation, Involvement, Parenting Program (VIP) encourage and enable parents to develop parenting plans through mediation setting verse a judicial setting?"*

*" If you an attorney, why do you refer clients to VIP? If not, why don't you do referral?"*

*" If you are a non-custodial, why did you initiate VIP services?"*

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<sup>3</sup> 1998 Family Support Act P.L. 100-485

<sup>4</sup> Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) P.L. 104-193

*(See Appendix A of survey)*

This Certified Public Management (CPM) project evolved as a logical step in support of both pilot programs being expanded and becoming a core part of SCDSS' Strategic Plan and listed in its annual accountability report.

### **Purpose of Project**

The purpose of this project is to conduct a satisfaction survey of the VIP Program. The survey will serve as the agency's formal assessment method for implementing the VIP Program statewide and to encourage and promote the active participation of both parents in the lives of their children, except for those instances where such involvement would not be in the best interest of the children, such as cases involving domestic violence, substance abuse, child abuse or neglect. Also, improving the service array in South Carolina on Access and Visitation issues. This project serves as a starting point for implementing a continuous improvement process in the area of access and visitation in South Carolina.

Surveys results will provide a baseline data about non-custodial parents, family court staff, attorneys, Judges, community and the child (ren) and should be analyzed to identify opportunities for improvement. Once areas needing improvement are identified, strategies should be developed to address needed improvement. The on-going process should include periodic surveys of participants, family court staff, DSS staff, and community; analysis of data to identify strengths and weakness; the development and implementation of strategies to improve weakness; and comparative analysis to evaluate strategy effectiveness.

## What the Experts Say

Statistics about deadbeat dads' and the effects of absent fathers by Stanford.EDU<sup>5</sup>, show how the pressure of the government into protecting the rights of fathers in addition to those of the mother, can benefit the children from the special relationship of TWO parents who care for them and are actively involved in their lives. The statistics below shows the effect the ABSENCE of a father has on the nearly 22% of American children in fatherless households:

- 63% of youth suicides are from fatherless homes<sup>6</sup>
- 90% of all homeless and runaway children are from fatherless homes
- 85% of all children that exhibit behavioral disorders come from fatherless homes<sup>7</sup>
- 80% of rapists motivated with displaced anger come from fatherless homes<sup>8</sup>
- 71% of all high school dropouts come from fatherless homes<sup>9</sup>
- 75% of all adolescent patients in chemical abuse centers come from fatherless homes<sup>10</sup>
- 70% of juveniles in state-operated institutions come from fatherless homes<sup>11</sup>
- 85% of all youths sitting in prisons grew up in a fatherless home<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Stanford.EDU, (Marty Dart) 29 Jul 1994 11:34:42

<sup>6</sup> U.S. D.H.H.S., Bureau of the Census

<sup>7</sup> Center for Disease Control

<sup>8</sup> Criminal Justice & Behavior, Vol 14, p. 403-26, 1978

<sup>9</sup> National Principals Association Report on the State of High Schools

<sup>10</sup> Rainbows for all God's Children

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Dept. of Justice, Special Report, Sept 1988

<sup>12</sup> Fulton Co. Georgia jail populations, Texas Dept. of Corrections 1992

These statistics translate to mean that children from a fatherless home are:

- 5 times more likely to commit suicide.
- 32 times more likely to run away.
- 20 times more likely to have behavioral disorders.
- 14 times more likely to commit rape: This applies to boys of course.
- 9 times more likely to drop out of high school.
- 10 times more likely to abuse chemical substances.
- 9 times more likely to end up in a state-operated institution.
- 20 times more like to end up in prison.

### **1992 Status of the Judiciary, VA Supreme Court Report**

There are research documents showing that access/visitation interference occurs in an alarmingly high number of cases and that the family courts have not been able to enforce compliance by civil measures. In 1992 the state of Virginia's Judiciary Supreme Court Report showed the importance of access/visitation lends support to the necessity of reasonable deterrent measures and judicial training. In an survey conducted by Virginia's court, the following results;

**37.9% of fathers receive no access/visitation"** <sup>13</sup>

**"Between 25% - 33% of mothers denied visits"** <sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Child Support & Alimony: 1989 Series P-60, No.173, Issued September 1991 Pages 6 & 7 of the 1989 Census - Current Population Reports

<sup>14</sup> Frequency of Visitation by Divorced Fathers: Differences in Reports by Fathers and Mothers - Sanford H. Braver, Ph.D., Sharlene A. Wolchik, Ph.D., Irwin M. Sandler, Ph.D., Bruce S. Fogas, Ph.D., Daria Zvetina, M.Ed. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry pg. 451, col. 2, 2, lines 11 - 14

**"40% of mothers reported that they had interfered with the non- custodial father's visitation on at least one occasion, to punish their ex-spouse" <sup>15</sup>**

**Overall, approximately 50% of mothers "see no value in the father's continued contact with his children" <sup>16</sup>**

**"Unilateral abuse of parental custodial power is more common in court ordered sole custody situations." <sup>17</sup>**

**"Feelings of anger toward their former spouses hindered effective involvement on the part of the fathers; angry custodial mothers would sometimes sabotage father's efforts to visit their children" <sup>18</sup>**

**"Mothers may prevent visits to retaliate against the fathers for problems in their marital or post marital relationship" <sup>19</sup>**

**"Our research indicates that most fathers and children who are separated from each other face barriers to continued interaction" <sup>20</sup>**

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<sup>15</sup> pg. 449, Col. 2, 1, lines 3 - 6 citing Fullton, 1979) Frequency of Visitation by Divorced Fathers: Differences in Reports by Fathers and Mothers - Sanford H. Braver, Ph.D., Sharlene A. Wolchik, Ph.D., Irwin M. Sandler, Ph.D., Bruce S. Fogas, Ph.D., Daria Zvetina, M.Ed., American Journal of Orthopsychiatry

<sup>16</sup> pg. 125, 4, lines 1 and 2) Surviving the Breakup - Joan Berlin Kelly and Judith S. Wallerstein

<sup>17</sup> Child Custody and Parental Cooperation - Frank Williams, M.D., Dir. Psychiatry - Cedar-Sinai - Presented to the American Bar Association, Family Law Section, August 1987 and January 1988 pg. 4, col. 1, 1, lines 17 - 20

<sup>18</sup> The Effect of the Post Divorce Relationship on Paternal Involvement: A Longitudinal Analysis - Constance R. Ahrons, Ph.D., and Richard B. Miller, Ph.D., American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, Vol. 63, No. 3, July 1993 pg. 442, Col. 1, 1, lines 23 - 27

<sup>19</sup> Family Ties after Divorce: The Relationship Between Visiting and Paying Support - Judith A. Seltzer, Nora Shaeffer, Hong-wen Charing, University of Wisconsin, Journal of Marriage & the Family, Vol. 51, No. 4, November 1989. pg. 1015, Col. 2, 2, lines 5 - 8

**"The former spouse [mother] was the greatest obstacle to having more frequent contact with the children" <sup>21</sup>**

**"Unfortunately, some angry women attempted to use the child's symptomatic behaviors as proof that the visits were detrimental to the child's welfare and should therefore be discontinued, distressing the unhappy children even more" <sup>22</sup>**

**"The court's failure to enforce or expand visitation agreements were a frequently mentioned complaint" <sup>23</sup>**

**"90% of the violence and kidnapping we have seen are in sole custody situations in which the sole custodial parent fears losing his or her custody status, or the parent ectomized parent kidnaps the child away from the sole custody parent who possessively blocks the visiting parent from access." <sup>24</sup>**

**"Since parental judgment and leadership are weak following divorce, the court must step in and convey the message that parents of divorce are expected to cooperate" <sup>25</sup>**

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<sup>20</sup> Children's Contact with Absent Parents - Judith A. Seltzer, University of Wisconsin - Madison and Suzanne M. Bianchi, U.S. Bureau of the Census pg. 675, Col. 1, 1, Lines 2 - 5

<sup>21</sup> Increasing Our Understanding of Fathers Who Have Infrequent Contact With Their Children - James R. Dudley, Professor, University North Carolina, under a grant from Temple University, Family Relations, Vol. 4, No. 3, July 1991 pg. 281, Col. 2, 1, lines 1 - 4

<sup>22</sup> Surviving the Breakup, Joan Berlin Kelly and Judith S. Wallerstein, Basic Books pg. 126, 2, lines 1 - 5

<sup>23</sup> Increasing Our Understanding of Fathers Who Have Infrequent Contact With Their Children - James R. Dudley, Professor, University North Carolina, under a grant from Temple University, Family Relations, Vol. 4, No. 3, July 1991 pg. 281, col. 2, 2, lines 14 - 16

<sup>24</sup> Child Custody and Parental Cooperation - Frank Williams, M.D., Dir. Psychiatry - Cedar-Sinai - Presented at American Bar Association, Family Law Section, August 1987 and January 1988. - Kidnapping and Violence in Relation to Custody - Reprinted in Joint Custodian, Jan. 1988 pg. 4, Col. 1, 1, lines 3-9

<sup>25</sup> Child Custody and Parental Cooperation - Frank Williams, M.D., Dir. Psychiatry - Cedar-Sinai - Presented at American Bar Association, Family Law Section, August 1987 and January 1988 pg. 3, col. 1, 5, lines 1 - 4

## **Project Implementation**

This CPM project had three distinct phases: selecting the appropriate survey instrument; conducting the survey; and analyzing the results.

Selecting the appropriate survey was very time consuming due to the state budget cuts, which didn't allow time to work on the project during working hours. In order for the survey to be conducted, instruments that were used was a face-to face interview and the Internet approach by emailing the survey to staff, community, family court staff, child support staff and participants that received services from the VIP Program to ensure that data was received back on time. The survey addressed questions about likes and dislikes about the program. The race, income, resident, education, child support order (pay or didn't pay) and establishing paternity was asked in order to analyze data to see if any those factors had an impact as to why participants sought VIP services or if the reason why access to visitation was denied. (See Appendix B)

To conduct the survey with OCSE staff, it was a face-to face approach during their administrative court day at Family Court. In addition to OCSE staff at court, the survey was emailed to other OCSE staff, and asked to complete it, which required 20 minutes of their time. Also, the survey for family court staff was conducted on that same day, also asking staff for 20 minutes of their time to complete the survey and getting it back on the same day. As for the community, attorneys and the participants that used the VIP Program, the survey was administered by the surveyor (face-to face) door-to-door and via phone. The surveyor read each question and recorded the answer by checking yes

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or no in the box. The survey period spanned two (2) working days and three (3) days to compile the results.

## **GETTING STARTED:**

Under President Clinton administration, the Child Access Demonstration Project was the first official step the Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement took to support interventions aimed at addressing the issues of access and visitation. Also, Congress in 1997 appropriated \$10 million and each year after to promote the development of variety of programs designed to alleviate the problem associated with access and visitation. Many states according to Policy Studies Inc. (PSI)<sup>26</sup>, support laws that would improve the living conditions of children throughout our country. In addition, Pat Littlejohn, Assistant Executive Director of Sister of Charity Foundation states, "Facts dictate that what children really need is a father in their lives, as well as a mother." Many fathers that seek service to address visitation, say that perhaps if such energies were directed at educating family courts judges who award sole custody to the mother in over 90% of custody cases might see more of the results Mrs. Littlejohn purports to desire.

In conducting information to do this project, information from multiple sources show that only 10% of all non-custodial father fit the "deadbeat dad" category: 90% of the fathers with joint custody paid the support due. Fathers with visitation rights pay 79.1%; and 44.5% of those with NO visitation rights still financially support their

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<sup>26</sup> Evaluation of South Carolina's VIP Program, October 31, 2000

children.<sup>27</sup> Additionally, of those NOT paying support, 66% are not doing so because they lack the financial resources to pay.<sup>28</sup>

In 1998, Mahaliah Bowman-Campbell a former Child Support Specialist which duties are to assist Colleton County Family Court staff with establishing child support orders, paternity, and enforcing support orders to serve on the Strengthening Family Bonds (SFB) Advisory Committee. To be awarded the grant to establish the pilot Access & Visitation Program, Colleton County Department of Social Services needed statistics on the number of child support cases that were in arrears and the number of paternity cases.

September 1, 1998, Mrs. Campbell was hired as the Program Director for Access and Visitation Program. She was trained as a Certified Mediator and Certified Parent Facilitator. As the director of the program, she would record how many parents contact SFB, schedule mediation session and asked some basic questions (providing insight and possible barriers), and record who appeared, number of agreements, and any other issues. As the director, data would be gathered to screen parents for domestic violence and child abuse. Also, Kershaw and Richland Counties became pilot sites, whose Program Director would be house in the OCSE office in Columbia. The pilot programs would provide parenting classes, parenting classes that are tailored to meet the participants' specific needs and provide childcare. Mediation, establishing court order visitation orders, assists with enforcement of the orders and provide employment and training services. The goal of the VIP Program is helping parents to develop a greater relationship with their child(ren) by reducing or eliminating obstacles standing in their way.

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<sup>27</sup> Census Bureau report, Series P-23, No. 173

<sup>28</sup> GAO report: GAO/HRD-92-39 FS

In 1999, the SFB and Access & Visitation changed its name to the Visitation, Involvement, Parenting (VIP) Program. For the Colleton County VIP Program, three other components were added to included; Father/Child Day Camp, Father/Child Night Out and VIP Adult Literacy /Computer Lab. The Father/Child Day Camp in the beginning operated for one week and mandated fathers to spend two to three days with the child(ren). During the Day Camp sessions, which took place during the first week of June, fathers would go to the library, attend workshops on youth violence to discourage youth from crime. Also, fathers were mandated to attend a social outing, for example; movies, dinner, or a baseball games. For each event, parents were required to pay the registration fee and VIP Program paid all other expenses.

### **Colleton County VIP Program:**

The VIP Program in Colleton County is staff with one person, which is the Director, who's primary responsibility is to deliver the core program service. Her duties are to provide the parenting skill classes, with the assistance of co-workers to facilitate parenting classes. The Director is solely responsible for program outreach, recruitment, counseling, and mediation. In addition, she provides non-custodial parents with basic information relating to child support issues, including contempt procedures, guideline calculations and review and adjustment of support orders.

### **Participants/Outcomes:**

In September 1998 to October 1, 2000, the VIP had mediated 63 cases with one or both parents attending parenting classes. As of today's date, the VIP Program has mediated 200 additional cases, reached 79 visitation agreements and 20 court ordered

visitation orders. Child support payments have become more regular and parent/children involvement has also increased. In many cases, parents that choose mediation verse judicial had a financial saving, on average, of \$500.00 to \$1500.00 in legal cost. In addition to saving in legal cost, children have the attention of both parental involvement, and their school grades improved as well as their behavior.

In addition to mediation services, the VIP provides parenting skills classes to non-custodial parents who are incarcerated for failing to pay court order child support payments. The non-custodial parents are court order to attend sessions as long as he/she are incarcerated, which for many, were 3 to 6 months. The non-custodial parents are educated on the importance of financially supporting their child(ren). As of June 2000, there have been 50 non-custodial parents who attended parenting skills classes, and once released from jail, 25% started paying their child support regularly, became more involved with their child(ren), child support order was dismissed and 5% now live with their child(ren), and 20% returned to jail for continued failure to pay child support per the court order. (In many cases, it is out of their control. Most of the father were uneducated, lack of transportation and/or poor job skills).

Also, when a mediation agreement for visitation is not adhered to, the VIP Director assists with helping parties incorporate an enforceable court order by *Pro Se* (self-representation). The VIP program assists with the court filing and serving fee of \$100.00 and assists with the completion of a Summon and Complaint for visitation, which the procedure saves the parties \$500.00 to \$1500.00.

In addition to the program core area, the VIP Program currently receives about 10-20 emails per day from clients seeking assistance with visitation from other states, and

nearby neighboring counties. For many, the Director can assist them by responding back with links or phone numbers to other agencies in other states. The VIP Director has written or co-written several grants ranging from \$1,500 to \$225,000 to expand services to non-custodial and custodial parents to assist them with GED education, Job training, and Technical Colleges. As of February 2003, the grants fund has assisted 24 non-custodial and custodial parents to receive a C.N.A (Certified Nursing Assistance) certificate and 8 non-custodial or custodial parents receive their GED degree.

### **Survey Finding:**

Out of a total of 40 surveys directed to the staff and coworkers 34 have known about the VIP Program 1-5 years and 6 knew about the program for 1-3 years. Everyone who took the survey was aware of the program. All surveys showed that they did have a program in their prospective counties, did make frequent referrals and knew of the contact person for this program. The majority of the responses made for input into advantages and disadvantages were that more people are now aware of the program in the community and that this will be a resource for those who could benefit from this program.

Most of the fathers that answered the survey stated that it helped them reconnect with their children and understand the financial assistance to the children even when visitation agreements were not adhered to and they did not get the visitation stated in the agreement. Many of the calls that were received in the OCSE were fathers that felt this program should be available in all counties.

The following recommendation is that the program should become a core program of DSS.

**Appendix A: Colleton County DSS staff and County Director**

**Subject: VIP Program Satisfaction Survey**

Visitation, Involvement, Parenting Program (VIP) is conducting a survey order to establish a baseline data regarding the program performance, need, and accessibility. This is also to identify areas of improvement and weakness' of the program.

Please complete the following survey and place it in Mahaliah Campbell's office box no later than January 29, 2004. Your name and the department are optional.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

Mahaliah Bowman-Campbell

**Appendix B News paper article of VIP 's services**

**Newspaper Business: Press & Standard, Tuesday, October 15, 2002**

**Subject: VIP's GED Program**

## **Appendix C: Survey to community, attorneys and VIP participants**

### **Subject: Satisfaction Survey**

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Mahaliah Bowman-Campbell

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Glen Hastin, Program Director for Federal Access and Visitation, OCSE Columbia, SC



Colleton County Department Of Social Services  
Visitation, Involvement, Parenting Program  
Survey/CPM Project

Visitation, Involvement, Parenting Program (VIP) is conducting a survey order to establish a baseline data regarding the program performance, need, and accessibility. This is also to identify areas of improvement and weakness' of the program.

**Please complete the following survey and place it in Mahaliah Campbell's office box no later than January 29, 2004. Your name and the department are optional. Thank you in advance for your participation.**

**Mahaliah Bowman-Campbell  
Program Director**

**Please answer the following questions:**

**1. How long have you known about the VIP Program?**

- Less than 1 year
- 1-2 years
- 1-3 years
- 1-5 years

**2. Does your County provide VIP services?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

**3. Do you or your staff make referrals to the VIP Program?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

**4. If you are a caseworker, have any of your client's requested services of the VIP Program?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

**5. Do you know the contact person for the service area for the VIP Program?**

- Yes
- No

**6. If you are a Director of a County office, do you think the VIP program should be a statewide service?**

- Yes, Why
- No, Why
- No comment

**7. As a Director of a County office, where should the VIP program be housed?**

- Family Court
- Child Support Enforcement Division
- County DSS office
- Other

**8. As a Director of a County office, how many staff do you feel would be needed for this program?**

- More than 3
- Less than 10
- Fewer than six

**9. As a caseworker or a County Director, do you think the court should mandate clients to participate in the VIP program if child support is an issue?**

- Yes, Explain
- No, Explain

**10. What suggestions would you give to increase the awareness of the program?**

**11. What advantages and disadvantage does DSS have in helping non-custodial parents?**

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216 S. Lemack Street

Walterboro, SC 29488

Phone: 843-549-1894, ext. 185

E-mail: [Mcampbell@dss.state.sc.us](mailto:Mcampbell@dss.state.sc.us)

Project Paper

Submitted February 2, 2004

1. What can the Federal/State Government Can Do To Support Responsible Fatherhood Efforts?

Colleton County Department Of Social Services  
Visitation, Involvement, Parenting Program  
Survey/CPM Project

Visitation, Involvement, Parenting Program (VIP) is conducting a survey in order to establish a baseline data regarding the program performance, need and accessibility. This is also to identify areas of improvement and weakness of the program.

Please complete the following survey and returned it to the front window. If there are any questions, please feel free to ask the receptionist to page Mahaliah Campbell. Thanking you in advance for your participation.

Please check the box or answer the question below:

1. I am the  Mom  Dad
  
2. Is Visitation and issues? Yes  No
  
3. How did you hear about the VIP Program?
  - a. Brochures
  - b. Family Court
  - c. Child Support Enforcement
  - d. Colleton DSS Staff
  - e. Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. When was the last time you as a non-custodial parent visit with your child?
  - a. 1-5 days ago
  - b. 5-20 days ago
  - c. 30-90 days ago
  - d. 12 months +
  
5. How many child (ren) do you have court orders for:
  - e. 0-1
  - f. 1-2
  - g. 3-5
  - h. 6+
  
6. What is the court order payment?
  - i. \$35.00 wkly
  - j. \$75-150 bi-wkly
  - k. \$250-550 monthly
  - l. Other \_\_\_\_\_

7. Are you current with your Child Support Payments? Yes  No
8. Is Child Support arrears is the main reason for not visiting your child (ren)?  
Yes  NO
9. Degree of Conflict of communication you have with Mom or Dad:  
1=Uncooperative, 5= Cooperative  
1 2 3 4 5
10. Mediation  *Pro Se*  Counseling
11. Number of Mediation Sessions: \_\_\_\_\_
12. Was a visitation agreement reaches? Yes  No
13. What obstacles were identifying that made visitation difficult?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. During Mediation, were you flexibility in the agreement?  Yes  No
15. Was the issue resolved to parents' satisfaction?  
Mom  Yes  No  
Dad  Yes
- Please rate the Mediator:
16. Degree to move the mediation process quickly:  
1= Uncooperative, 5= Cooperative  
1 2 3 4 5
17. Did the Mediator offer any parenting resource information?  Yes  No
18. Did the Mediator explain the process in terms that you could understand?  
 Yes  No
19. Was the Mediator respectful?  Yes  No
20. Overall, were you satisfied with the service provided?  Yes  No
21. Does the Visitation, Involvement, Parenting Program (VIP) encourage and enable parents to develop parenting plans through mediation setting verse a judicial setting?

22. If you an attorney, why do you refer clients to VIP? If not, why don't you do referral?
  
23. If you are a non-custodial parent, why did you initiate VIP services?

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## Stats & Quotes

### Just How Serious Is The Problem? Facts And Figures About Stress In The Workplace

- The Cost
- The Pervasiveness of Stress
- The Effects
- Addressing Stress in The Workplace: ROI

#### The Cost

##### Health Care Related Costs

The cost of corporate health benefits, as a percentage of after-tax profits, increased from 26% in 1989 to 45% in 1990.

*Health Care Benefits Survey 1991 - Indemnity Plans - Cost, Design, and Funding. Princeton, NJ: A. Foster Higgins & Co., Inc; 1992: 2-3.*

Research shows that 60% to 90% of doctor visits are stress-related.

*Perkins, A. (1994). Saving money by reducing stress. Harvard Business Review. 72(6):12.*

The total health and productivity cost of worker stress to American business is estimated at \$50-\$150 billion annually.

*Sauter, S.L.; Murphy, L.R.; and Hurrell, Jr., J.J. (1990) Prevention of work-related psychological disorders. American Psychologist. 45(10):1146-1153*

Northwest National Life reported in 1993 that one million absences each in the workplace are stress-related.

*Farrell, F. (1994) The demoralized zone: Healing the downsizing survivors. Executive Directions. September/October: 37-43*

California Workers' Compensation Institute (1983) reported that gradual mental stress claims more than doubled from 1980 to 1982. The National Council on Compensation Insurance said that gradual mental stress

accounted for 11% of all claims for occupational disease. From 1981 to 1995, the costs of workers' compensation for gradual mental stress reached, and then surpassed, the average cost of claims for other occupational disease.

*Sauter, S.L.; Murphy, L.R.; and Hurrell, Jr., J.J. (1990). Prevention of work-related psychological disorders. American Psychologist. 45(10):1146-1153*

"A landmark 20-year study conducted by the University of London concluded that unmanaged reactions to stress were a more dangerous risk factor for cancer and heart disease than either cigarette smoking or high cholesterol foods."

*Cryer, B. (1996). Neutralizing Workplace Stress: The Physiology of Human Performance and Organizational Effectiveness. presented at: Psychological Disabilities in the Workplace, The Centre for Professional Learning, Toronto, CA. June 12, 1996. <http://www.webcom.com/hr/math/IHM/Articles/Neutralize2.html>*

Experts estimate that it costs American employers \$700 million per year to replace the 200,000 men aged 45 to 65 who die or are incapacitated by coronary artery disease.

*Cooper, C.; Cooper, R.; and Baker, L. (1988). Living with Stress. Harmondsworth, NY: Penguin Health.*

A study of 3,020 aircraft employees showed that employees who "hardly ever" enjoyed their job were 2.5 times more likely to report a back injury than those who reported "almost always" enjoying their job.

*Bigos, S.J.; Battie, M.C.; Spengler, D.M.; Fisher, L.D.; Fordyce, W.E.; Hansonn, T.H.; Nachemson, A.L.; and Wortley, M.D.. A prospective study of work perceptions and psychosocial factors affecting the report of back injury, Spine, 1, 1?7, 1991.*

A recent study at a manufacturing plant, showed that employees who report high levels of role conflict, physical environment stress, and overall work stress had significantly higher ( $p < .01$ ,  $p < .05$ , and  $p < .05$  respectively) physician-excused absences.

*Heaney, C.; Clemans, J. (1996). Occupational stress, physician-excused absences, and absences not excused by a physician. American Journal of Health Promotion. Vol. 10(2): 117-124.*

Forty percent of job turnover is due to stress.

*Bureau of National Affairs*

Workers with high stress were over two times more likely to be absent 5 days a year.

*Jacobson et al (1996) American Journal of Health Promotion, 11(1).*

Unscheduled absences by US employees rose by 9% in 1993, costing wo organizations as much as \$750 per employee, according to a national sur

*Moskal, B.S. (1994) Unscheduled absences by U.S. Employees: "Missing Persons," Industry Week, August 15: 22.*

### **Counterproductive Behavior**

In 1985, counterproductive behavior by workers cost American business billion annually. This cost is increasing by approximately 15% annually.

*Kuhn, R.(1988).Psychological tests reduce counterproductive acts by employees. Assets Protection. 9:9-12.*

### **Litigation**

In 1986 alone, plaintiffs received favorable verdicts in 78% of the wrong discharge cases that went to jury in California, the total awards averaged \$424,527.

*Fulmer, W. E. and Casey, A.W. (1990). Employment at will: Options for managers. Academy of Management Executive. May, 1990: 102.*

"Workplace trauma has its roots in the culture of the organization. Recen court decisions have supported this notion by affirming that the creation environment that may be perceived as offensive, threatening or hostile is sufficient basis for liability on the part of the employer, regardless of the direct experience of an individual member."

*Tyler, T. R. (1989) Do employees really care about due process? Proceedings of the 1989 Employee Responsibilities and Rights, American Bar. Northwestern University.*

The primary issue related to litigation in wrongful termination is the perception of injustice.

*Tyler, T. R. (1989) Do employees really care about due process? Proceedings of the 1989 Employee Responsibilities and Rights, American Bar. Northwestern University.*

### **Decreased Productivity**

A Gallup Poll of 201 U.S. corporations revealed that 60% of all manager that stress related illness was pervasive among their workers and decreas productivity at an estimated cost of 16 days of sick leave and \$8,000 per person per year.

*The Gallup Organization*

Every time a grievance is brought up, lost productivity by the employee & those around him/her is about 80 work hours.

*Wilson, B. (1991) U.S. businesses suffer from workplace trauma. Personnel Journal. July, 1991: 47-50.*

\$5 to \$6 billion decreased productivity annually occurs due to real or perceived abuse of employees.

*Bureau of National Affairs. (1990) Violence and Stress: The Work/Family Connection. The BNA Special Report on Work and Family, Special Report #32. August 1990: 2.*

Based on empirical estimates of workplace impairment with respect to mental illness, the authors state "we assume that depressed individuals contribute 20% less during an episode than under

*Greeber, P. et al (1993) The economic burden of depression in 1990. The Journal of Clinical Psychiatry. 54(11), 405-418.*

The average depressed worker costs their employer \$3,000 per year.

*Greeber, P. et al (1993) The economic burden of depression in 1990. The Journal of Clinical Psychiatry. 54(11), 405-418.*

**Accidents**

Insurance data indicates insurance claims for stress-related industrial accidents cost nearly twice as much as non stress-related industrial accidents.

*Perkins, A. (1994). Savings money by reducing stress. Harvard Business Review. 72(6):12.*

Employees with low satisfaction are more likely to have multiple injuries than those with high satisfaction (54% to 43%). Employees with a higher number of stressful life events were more likely to have had more than one injury than those with low (53% to 41%).

*Webb, G. et al. (1994). The relationships between high-risk and problem drinking and the occurrence of work injuries and related absences. Journal of Studies on Alcohol. 55 (4), 441-442.*

**The Pervasiveness of Stress**

Constandino 'Dean' Biris, a consultant on corporate change, estimates that at least 45% of American managers suffer too much stress." As a result, "they are becoming abusive, intolerant, and dictatorial." pg. 74

*Smith, E.T., Brott, J., Cuneo, A., and Davis, J.E. (1988) Stress: The test Americans are failing. Business Week. April 18: 74-76*

The 1985 National Health Interview Survey revealed that an estimated 1 million workers report health-endangering levels of mental stress at work. Only one other hazardous work condition - loud noise, was found to be more prevalent in the workplace.

*Shilling, S. and Brackbill, R.M. (1987) Occupational health and safety risks and potential health consequences perceived by U.S. workers. Public Health Reports. 102:36-46.*

## **The Effects**

### **General Effects and Mitigating Factors**

A survey by St. Paul Fire and Marine Insurance Company of 28,000 workers representing 215 diverse organizations produced the following results:

Teamwork and supervision problems were the most consistently and strongly related to burnout, health problems, and performance problems. Teamwork was at the top of the list for all of these.

Results of the study showed:

- Stress at work is strongly correlated to employee burnout, and health and performance problems.
- Among personal life problems, those caused by one's job are the most potent.
- Balance enhances employee morale, health, and performance.
- Male and female perceptions of the workplace are nearly identical.

*Kohler, S. and Kamp, J. (1992). American Workers Under Pressure Technical Report. St. Paul Fire and Marine Insurance Company. St. Paul, MN.*

### **The Stress/Control Connection**

Men with demanding jobs that give them little control have three times the risk of hypertension as co-workers. Men with demanding jobs with control show no ill effects.

*Yandrick, Rudy and Freeman, Michael (General Editor), 1996. Behavioral Risk Management: How to Avoid Preventable Losses from Mental Health Problems in the Workplace. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.*

American women with heavy work loads and little job control are three times more likely to develop coronary heart disease than women with the same work load, but who had more control.

*Rosen, The Healthy Company***Cognitive Impairment**

Research with humans experiencing uncontrollable stress shows that such stress results in a deterioration in their cognitive processes, resulting in diminished problem-solving abilities.

*Seligman, M. (1972). Helplessness: On Depression, Development, and Death. San Francisco: Freeman and Company.*

Experiments with humans show that uncontrollable stress leads to a shift thought process to a superficial, simplistic, unoriginal style of thinking.

*Pennebaker, J. (1990). Opening Up: The Healing Power of Confiding In Others. NY: Morrow.*

Our ability to learn is directly affected by our emotional state. When we are feeling stressed and insecure, our ability to learn is seriously compromised.

*Rose, C. (1985). Accelerated Learning. NY: Dell Books.*

**Aggressive, Territorial Behavior**

As stress levels increase, people revert to more primitive hard wired survival patterns. One consequence of this is that when stressed, they are more likely to respond in an aggressive, territorial, paranoid manner.

*Bernstein, A. and Rozen, S. (1989). Dinosaur Brain. NY: Ballentine Books.*

**Increased Rigidity and Inflexibility in the Face of Change**

Downshifting is the process in which, as stress level increases, our intellectual, emotional, and interpersonal functioning becomes more primitive and therefore, less effective.

*Hart, Leslie.(1983). Human Brain, Human Learning. New York: Longman.*

When we downshift, we revert to the tried and true... Our responses become more automatic and limited. We are less able to access all that we know or see what is really there. Our ability to consider subtle environmental and internal cues is reduced. We also seem less able to engage in complex intellectual tasks, those requiring creativity and the ability to engage in open ended thinking and questioning. (pg. 72)

*Caine, R. and Caine, G. (1994). Making Connections: Teaching and the Human Brain. NY: Addison Wesley.*

### **Difficulty Responding Effectively to Challenges**

Studies on humans suggest that chronically stressed individuals show greater reactivity to, and prolonged recovery from, challenging tasks. pg. 216

*Brosschot, J.F.; Benschop, R.J.; Godaert, G.L.; Olff, M.; De Smet, M.; Heijnen, C.J.; and Ballieux, R.E. Influence of life stress on immunological reactivity to mild psychological stress. Psychosomatic Medicine, 56, 216-224, 1994*

After AT&T's downsizing of 32,000 employees over several years, the company's top psychiatrist Dr. Joel Moses, noted that workers showed signs of "disengagement", a subtle lack of focus and commitment. Richard J. Ritchie - manager of corporate psychological research noted the "flashback phenomenon," where survivors would respond to announcements of layoffs in other departments as if their own jobs were in danger.

*Smith, E.T., Brott, J., Cuneo, A., and Davis, J.E. (1988) Stress: The test Americans are failing. Business Week. April 18: 74-76*

### **Addressing Stress in The Workplace: ROI**

At a Minnesota electronics manufacturer, management had employees complete the Human Factors Inventory (a stress/general wellbeing inventory) during a major downsizing. The survey showed high levels of worker stress. The company implemented a variety of programs to address this problem. Result - workers' compensation claims decreased by 30%.

*Kohler, S. and Kamp, J. (1992). American Workers Under Pressure Technical Report. St. Paul Fire and Marine Insurance Company. St. Paul, MN.*

A Minnesota plastics manufacturer surveyed employees using St. Paul's Human Factors Inventory. Results portrayed a workforce that was bored, frustrated over the lack of communication and involvement in decision-making. They also showed a lack of commitment to company quality, safety, and productivity.

They implemented a task force in each department to address these issues, improved benefits, created a safety incentive program, and a newsletter.

Result: a 56% drop in workers' compensation claims

*Kohler, S. and Kamp, J. (1992). American Workers Under Pressure Technical Report. St. Paul Fire and Marine Insurance Company. St. Paul, MN.*

The management of Waste Management, Inc. from Oakbrook, Illinois; believed that worker stress was contributing to absenteeism and medical claims. They instituted a stress management program, which has resulted

cost savings of \$3,750 to \$15,000 savings per participant, (amount of savings depended on their annual income).

*Naas, R. (1992) Health promotion programs yield long-term savings. Business and Health. 10(13):41-47*

Data from the Human Factors Inventory administered to approximately 1 employees of a Midwestern hospital resulted in the following organizational changes:

- A comprehensive in-house EAP
- The addition of a stress management program to the hospital's back program
- An intensive problem-focused consultation to leaders of problem departments.

This translated into the following Workers Compensation claim savings:

- Workers Compensation claims dropped from 3.1 claims per month to 0.6 per month.
- Average monthly cost of claims dropped from \$7,329 to \$324.
- Average total expected claims cost dropped from \$24,199 to \$2,570.

The authors conclude:

....the results suggest that while a one-time stress management program may have little, if any, effect on accident and injury occurrences, a more permanent, comprehensive, organization-wide program can have more substantial effects.

*Steffy, B.; Jones, J.; Murphy, L.; and Kunz, L. (1986). A demonstration of the impact of stress abatement programs on reducing employee=s accidents and their costs. American Journal of Health Promotion. Fall, 25- 32.*

Biofeedback and muscle relaxation training was offered to workers at a public works department in an effort to reduce work-related injuries. Participants had significantly fewer ( $p < .05$ ) post-training injuries than non-participants.

*Steffy, B.; Jones, J.; Murphy, L.; and Kunz, L. (1986). A demonstration of the impact of stress abatement programs on reducing employee=s accidents and their costs. American Journal of Health Promotion. Fall, 25- 32.*

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## Articles

### **Becoming a Talent Magnet: How to Attract and Retain Great Employees**

By David Lee

*Originally published in Insights: The Journal of the Northeast HR  
Association*

Although most business owners and CEOs say they realize the critical role attracting and retaining high quality employees plays in their company's success, a recent survey by Kepner-Tregoe of Princeton, New Jersey, seems to demonstrate what many employees experience firsthand - many don't "walk the talk." In their survey of 1,290 employees, Kepner-Tregoe found that 64% of workers stated that top management doesn't initiate programs to reduce turnover.

When management does address this issue, they often focus their attraction and retention efforts on financial factors - competitive pay and a good benefits package. Although important, these are not enough to attract and retain the best of the best. In fact, the Kepner-Tregoe study revealed that 40% of employees felt that increased salaries and financial rewards were ineffective in reducing turnover. In Fortune magazine's "100 Best Companies to Work For" survey, not a single employee mentioned money as a reason why they loved the place they worked. If competitive salary and a generous compensation package aren't enough, what does make a company the kind of place that draws great people to it, and makes them want to stay? In short, what makes a company a Talent Magnet.

Talent Magnet organizations attract and retain great employees because they satisfy the key human needs that influence performance and loyalty. They satisfy these needs by the way they are lead and managed. In this article, we will identify several core human needs which affect how people feel about a company, and how Talent Magnet organizations address these. The following list is not meant to be exhaustive, but rather a place for HR managers to

begin the conversation with their fellow managers about how they can co-create a Talent Magnet Organization.

### **What Are People Looking For?**

#### **Pride In Where They Work and What They Do**

The type of person employers want most - those who do an outstanding job and take pride in their work - want to be proud of the company they work for. Companies that produce mediocre products or provide poor service have difficulty attracting and retaining excellent workers - regardless of how generous their benefits and compensation package. Conversely, companies that offer the highest quality products and service are far more likely to attract and retain the "best of the best." Employee pride also comes from observing management making decisions that show a clear understanding of what is going on "in the trenches." When management tolerates shoddy decision-making and mediocre management, pride is damaged. When an organization embodies excellence, it creates a self-reinforcing, winning success cycle - a great company that attracts great people who make it possible for the company to remain great.

### **Meaning and Purpose**

Meaningful work brings workers alive in a way a generous benefits package cannot. In the words of Studs Terkel, author of *Working*, employees "search, too, for daily meaning as well as daily bread, for recognition as well as cash, for astonishment rather than torpor; in short, for a sort of life rather than a Monday through Friday sort of dying."

How do Talent Magnet organizations address this issue? First, they have, and embody, a mission and a vision that captures the hearts and souls of their workforce. Second, they continuously communicate their mission and vision to their people. Third, they communicate the important role each employee has in making the vision a reality. Fourth, they give employees the tools and freedom to make a difference in the company. Fifth, they let employees hear "the voice of the customer," to help them stay connected to the bigger picture. Medtronic, a medical products company from Minneapolis, helps their employees hear the voice of the customer and stay connected to the big picture by flying in patients whose lives were saved by Medtronic products, along with their families and doctors, to the company's annual holiday party, and letting employees hear their stories.

## **Appreciation**

Showing genuine appreciation is simple, inexpensive, and tremendously effective. Research shows that appreciation is one of the strongest, if not the strongest, employee motivator. How do you show appreciation? It can be as simple as saying "Thanks for doing a great job," when handing out paychecks, as does Meredith Burgess of Burgess Advertising, a Portland, Maine firm known for having far greater employee and client retention than is typical for an industry characterized by rapid turnover and fickle relationships.

Doug Levin, CEO of Fresh Samantha, the natural fruit juice phenomenon from Maine, solicits information from managers every week, about who has done a great job, gone the extra mile, or has done some other outstanding "Juicehead" action, and sends them "Thank you" notes. At Oakhurst Dairy, of Portland, Maine, co-owners Bill and Stan Bennett are always on the lookout for employees going the extra mile, and then making sure they get a gift certificate to dinner, the movies, or some other small token of appreciation. It's not the "prize" that matters as much as the underlying message - "We don't take you for granted; we notice the good things you do." In fact, management at Talent Magnet companies are careful not to confuse prizes, awards, and Employee Appreciation Days with genuine, ongoing, person-to-person displays of appreciation. The former can create cynicism and decrease motivation; the latter taps into one of the most powerful human needs and motivators.

## **Opportunities To Learn and Grow**

When work allows employees to use their minds, acquire new skills, and face situations that invite them to grow, they come alive. Talent Magnet organizations address this fundamental need by providing their employees with ongoing learning opportunities. They do this not only through formal training, but through cross-training, and assigning employees projects and responsibilities that cause them to stretch. Even for production work that might not be considered "knowledge work," innovative companies like Hussey Seating of South Berwick, Maine design jobs so front-line employees get to bring their brains as well as their brawn to work. Using a team model, production workers at Hussey Seating are actively engaged in decision-making and process improvement initiatives.

While management at non-Talent Magnet organizations

view training as a luxury they either can't afford, or don't have the time for, management at Talent Magnet organizations see it as investment in attracting, retaining, and growing a world class workforce.

### **Respect**

Managers at Talent Magnet organizations realize that every management action, response, or communication conveys a message about how much management respects - or doesn't respect - its employees. They realize that simple demonstrations of respect, like not requiring employees to ask permission for every minor decision, or saying "Would you..." rather than "You should..." or "You need to..." when assigning tasks, makes a big difference in how employees feel about their employer. Management shows respect by soliciting input from people on the front-line. When Keane, Inc.'s co-presidents Brian and John, Keane, Jr. go out into the field and ask their people in the trenches "What do you recommend we do about this situation?" they send a clear message of personal and professional respect, and reinforce Keane's reputation as a great place to work. Asking for employee's input on how they feel about the organization and the way they are managed - and then responding to the feedback - is another sign of respect.

Respect is also shown by recognizing that employees have a life outside of work. It's demonstrated by not piling on so much that work employees don't have a life, and not requiring them to beg for flexible scheduling so they can meet their other life responsibilities. At Tom's of Maine, employees recently requested that they leave early on Friday for the summer. The fact that they even dared ask for that says something about the company. The fact that management agreed - and that productivity has not decreased - says something even more important about the company and the kind of mutual respect and commitment that comes out of such responsiveness. Tom's management also responds flexibly to their workers' child care challenges, resulting in employees who can focus on doing a great job, rather than on how they are going to juggle work and home responsibilities - and feeling resentful.

### **This Isn't Rocket Science.... So How Come So Few Companies Do These Things?**

These needs are so basic; so obvious; yet so often not met by companies. HR Managers need to be aware of what prevent companies from recognizing and addressing these needs, if they are going to help their organization become a

Talent Magnet.

**Time Pressure** - Managers are often so time pressured and so focused on putting out fires, they incorrectly believe they don't have time to work on the "soft issues" related to the human side of business. Obviously, a lack of understanding about the impact these "soft issues" have on the bottom line contributes to their being put on the "nice to do if we had more time" list.

**Lack of Awareness** - When people are promoted to the managerial level because of their technical prowess, but lack effective interpersonal skills or an understanding of human nature, they are more likely to dismiss the human side of attraction and retention as "touchy feely" or just plain irrelevant.

**Arrogance** - Many companies show the same arrogance toward their employees as they do to their customers. They assume they know better than their customers and their employees about what would satisfy them, and don't bother to find out if they're correct. If they do ask, and the feedback isn't positive, they dismiss it as irrational and impertinent. Even when their workforce is hemorrhaging, they adamantly maintain that employee requests are inappropriate and impossible to satisfy.

**"Quick Fixitis"** - If managers can order an Employee Appreciation Day or an Employee of the Month award, they can remove "Implement Attraction and Retention Program" from their "to do" list. The feeling of mastery that accompanies the completion of a task is so intrinsically satisfying - especially to a harried manager whose work is never done - that it blinds us to whether the solution is effective or not.

The unfortunate truth is that quick fixes and gimmicky approaches to attraction and retention aren't effective; they can even have the opposite effect. Because people are very sensitive to insincerity, workers are quick to notice a disconnect between staged events and corporate proclamations, and the day to day treatment they receive by their manager and the company as a whole.

**HR Managers Can Help Their Organization Become a Talent Magnet by Helping Management...**

**...Recognize the Importance of Listening To The Voice of THEIR Customer - The Employees**

Assuming customers are happy without asking them if you're right, is a surefire way to lose customers - and employees - left and right. Talent Magnet organizations don't assume that what they are doing is working; they are constantly engaging in conversations with their workforce through employee satisfaction surveys, anonymous suggestion boxes, company-wide meetings, focus groups, and informal conversations. Importantly, they also work at creating a culture where honesty and openness is supported, so employees feel safe enough to voice their concerns.

### **...Identify From Their Own Experience What Works, And Doesn't Work**

When people compare their own experiences at positive and negative workplaces or with their best and worst boss, they find it difficult to deny the huge impact organizational culture and management practices have on performance and loyalty. HR Managers can help management identify those management practices and organizational qualities that lead to high performance and employee loyalty. They can do this by facilitating discussions among groups of managers, and then using this information, along with an employee survey, to assess what needs to be addressed in the organization.

### **...Recognize The Importance of Management Development**

According to Quinton Studer, president of Baptist Hospital, Inc., of Pensacola, Florida, "the number one things companies just don't want to spend money on (is) middle-management development." How employees feel about their organization is profoundly influenced by how they feel about their boss. When they have a boss who is respectful, inspiring, and appreciative, it's hard not to be loyal. Thus, management development is a wise investment for any organization seeking to maximize their ability to attract and retain the best of the best.

### **...Ask Themselves Tough Questions**

This is perhaps the most difficult step to take. Creating a Talent Magnet Organization requires courageous self-examination by management at all levels about how well they lead and about the kind of company they have created. This process of engaging in self-examination, and engaging employees in honest conversation about how well the company is run, can yield critical information about what steps need to be taken to transform an organization into a Talent Magnet. See the side bar for a few questions to get

the process started.

### **Conclusion**

It takes more than a generous benefits package and competitive salaries to attract and retain talented employees. It takes addressing the fundamental need people have for Pride, Meaning and Purpose, Appreciation, Opportunities To Learn and Grow, and Respect. Leaders at Talent Magnet organizations realize this, and continuously strive to address these fundamental human needs. By listening to the voice of their customer - their employees - and honestly engaging in self-examination, they can create an organization that is a magnet for great employees.

### **Is Your Organization a Talent Magnet?**

The following questions can help management begin the process of exploring if they are doing the things that create a Talent Magnet organization. Just as in customer service research, to effectively answer these questions requires management soliciting feedback from its customer - the employee. Without their input, all answers are merely conjecture.

Some Questions to Ask:

1. How do our people feel about being here?
2. Are we the kind of organization that inspires pride?
3. Are the products and/or services that we bring to the marketplace, and the operational decisions we make, worthy of pride?
4. Do we have a compelling mission and vision - and do we "walk our talk"?
5. Do we communicate our mission and vision to employees, and do we communicate how they contribute to it?
6. Do we work with employees to design their jobs so they are as meaningful and intrinsically satisfying as possible?
7. Do our employees feel appreciated?
8. Do we believe that training is important; and are we acting accordingly?
9. Do we provide opportunities for employees to grow by taking on more responsibility and developing new skills on the job, and could we provide more?
10. Do employees feel respected?
11. Are we open to feedback about how we manage, or do we assume that what we're doing is right, and its their job to adapt to us?

12. If I worked for me, how would I feel about being here?
13. Do we try to get the most work out of each employee, regardless of the toll it takes, both on them, and on the quality of their work?
14. Do we show respect for employees life outside of work?
15. Can employees discuss openly with management their work/life balance needs?
16. Do we have a workplace environment where people generally have fun and enjoy each other's company?
17. Can people be open and honest about how they feel and what they think?

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**About the Author:** David Lee is a consultant, speaker, and executive coach. The founder of HumanNature@Work, he has worked with organizations and presented at conferences throughout North America and overseas. He is the author of *Managing Employee Stress and Safety*, as well as dozens of articles on employee and organizational performance.

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**For More Information:**

David Lee, President  
HumanNature@Work  
P.O. Box 430  
Bar Mills, Maine 04004  
Tel: 207-929-3344  
E-mail: [info@HumanNatureAtWork.com](mailto:info@HumanNatureAtWork.com)

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## Articles

### **The Secret To Attracting and Retaining Excellent Employees**

by David Lee

*Originally published HRATV Network*

It's no secret that the challenge of finding high quality employees in today's tight labor market is on every manager and business owner's mind. What does appear to be a secret - given the typical response to this challenge - is what to do about it.

Most employee attraction and retention strategies consist of creating a competitive compensation and benefits package, or instituting an employee appreciation and recognition program. Even worse, many companies – especially smaller ones – think attracting the best employees is a lost cause for them, because they can't match the perks and programs showcased in Fortune magazine's 100 Best Places to Work.

Although most companies don't "get it" when it comes to attracting and retaining employees, some do. These companies are the Talent Magnets – the employers of choice for highly talented people. They know the key to attracting and retaining quality employees isn't compensation and benefits packages or gimmicky programs. They know the key is how well they address these four critical areas:

#### **Your Company's Image**

Great companies attract great people. If you have a strong brand in the marketplace, you will have a strong brand in the labor marketplace. If your company is synonymous with quality, you will attract quality people; if it isn't, you won't.

The Quality of Your Internal Operations – Your image in the marketplace influences your ability to attract good people. The quality of your internal operations influences your ability to retain these people. Out-dated technology, inadequate resources, inefficient work processes, and

stifling bureaucracy are guaranteed Talent Repellents. Conversely, when a company is run intelligently and efficiently, people want to stay and be part of such a world class operation.

### **How Well Your Management Team Treats Your Employees**

This is where so many companies drop the ball. They promote technically adept people to management positions, even if they have virtually no people skills. They further compound the problem by scrimping on management training and coaching, so these managers never develop the skills to bring out the best in their workers. Worse, many companies turn a blind eye to disrespectful or even abusive behavior by managers. The importance of having a top notch management team and great supervisors cannot be overstated. Research conducted by the Gallup Organization, involving over a million employees and 80,000 managers, revealed that having good managers was the most influential factor affecting both employee retention and performance.

Your Ability To Satisfy The Needs Of Your “Internal Customers,” Your Employees – Just as the key to marketing and customer service success is understanding what the customer wants, and then delivering it; competing in the labor market requires understanding what employees want, and then delivering that. Here are a few of the things employees want most:

- Pride in Where They Work and What They Do
- Meaningful Work
- Respect – Both Personal and Professional
- Sincere Expressions of Appreciation
- The Ability to Exercise Autonomy and Control in One’s Job
- The Opportunity to Learn and Grow on the Job
- A Sense of Community and Belonging
- Flexibility That Allows for Work/Life Balance
- The Opportunity to Make a Difference; To Have Input and Influence

### **Taking the First Step Toward Becoming a Talent Magnet**

The first step is to find out where you currently are. Find out what your “customers” – your employees – think about your company. Engage your management team in a very frank self-examination process about how well the company is run, and how well employees are managed. Use

the four critical areas and the nine key human needs outlined in this article as a launching point for this important discussion. By successfully addressing these, you will become a Talent Magnet.

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**About the Author:** David Lee is a consultant, speaker, and executive coach. The founder of HumanNature@Work, he has worked with organizations and presented at conferences throughout North America and overseas. He is the author of *Managing Employee Stress and Safety*, as well as dozens of articles on employee and organizational performance.

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**For More Information:**

David Lee, President  
HumanNature@Work  
P.O. Box 430  
Bar Mills, Maine 04004  
Tel: 207-929-3344  
E-mail: [info@HumanNatureAtWork.com](mailto:info@HumanNatureAtWork.com)

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## Articles

### Your First Task As A Recruiter: Recruit Senior Management Onto Your Team

by David Lee

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If your job is to recruit the best employees possible, here's what should be at the top of your "To Do" list: recruit senior management onto your team. You can increase your efficacy – and your value to your organization – by helping them recognize that the responsibility for recruiting talent doesn't lie in the recruiting department.

Recruiting talent is everybody's job and should be on everybody's mind. Recruiting is everybody's responsibility because every person, every decision, and every action influences whether your organization is a Talent Magnet or a Talent Repellent.

Any management team serious about their organization being a Talent Magnet should think about how they, and their actions, influence their Employer Brand, and then heed the advice of Starbucks' Chief Coffee Buyer, Dave Olsen. Mr. Olsen was asked by Scott Bedbury, author of *A New Brand World: Eight Principles for Achieving Brand Leadership in the 21st Century*, about the secret to Starbucks' powerhouse brand. What was the key to Starbucks' ability to get people to come through the door again and again. Was it their unique blends, their happening ambience, their hip baristas?

After thoughtfully considering all the variables, Olsen responded with two words that should be engraved on every manager's consciousness: "*Everything matters.*"

Everything matters when it comes to your Employer Brand. Everything matters when it comes to your ability to recruit – and more importantly, to attract – the best employees. Every interaction your organization has with your customers and the marketplace, every interaction your managers have with your employees, every operational process and employee policy matters. Each moment of truth shapes how your Employer Brand is perceived in the labor market.

Just as importantly, every moment of truth influences whether your recruiting efforts are limited to your recruiting department, or whether your whole workforce engages in recruiting. Research shows that the best source of quality applicants comes from an organization's employees – or more accurately, from *happy* employees. If you don't have happy employees who are proud of their employer, don't expect a stampede of employee referrals. If you do have happy employees, you're in the enviable position of Don Kemper, CEO of Healthwise, a Boise, Idaho company that produces health information for both consumers and the medical community. "For every open position, we get one or two employee referrals," notes Kemper. "In fact, the stories our employees tell about working here... they're our best recruiting tool."

If you can't say the same thing, you're like most organizations: your recruiting engine is firing on only one cylinder. When you compare what the majority of people say about their previous employers with what comes out of Healthwise's "volunteer PR firm" – its workers – you see why Everything Matters.

To unleash the recruiting power of your workforce, you need to have an organization that inspires loyalty, passion, and pride. To have this kind of an organization requires a unified effort with everybody recognizing that Everything Matters. It means that everybody understands that every policy, every process, every interaction, every decision matters. Whether deciding on how much to involve employees in a new initiative, communicating to employees about new developments, or simply following up on an employee's request, managers should examine every decision, action, and process through the lens of "How will this affect our Employer Brand?"

To begin this exploration, here are four questions for your senior management team:

### **Does Your Reputation In The Marketplace Warrant Pride?**

Your reputation in the marketplace, your corporate brand, affects your ability to attract talent. Employees want to feel proud of their employer, and they believe that they are part of an organization that produces world class products or delivers world class service. Thus, managers who oversee your organization's interface with the marketplace would be wise to scrutinize every marketing, public relations, and customer service process and ask:

- "How does the way we do this affect our Employer Brand, our appeal in the labor market?"
- "Does this process inspire pride in our workforce (and therefore their ability to speak highly of us)?"

When considering a change in these areas, an important part of the conversation should be how the change will affect your Employer Brand. For instance, if you make a change in your customer service process or

policy that is less customer-centric, expect a diminution in employee price and corresponding decrease in employee generated positive PR and referrals.

### **Does The Way You Run Your Organization Warrant Pride?**

Facilitating employee focus groups over the years has taught me one thing above all else: employees notice everything. Ineffective processes, poorly thought out decisions, nonsensical rules – they notice it all. These observations form the basis for some pretty unflattering assessments of management's ability to run the organization. These assessments, in turn profoundly affect not only employee morale and loyalty, but also what they say to others about their employer. Because management is usually unaware of these unspoken observations and judgments, they don't see how they are contributing to a weak or weakening Employer Brand. To prevent this from continuing, senior management would be wise to examine all organizational processes and ask:

- “Does the way we do this process reflect a well run operation, or fly-by-the-seat-of-the-pants outfit?”
- “Does the way we do this engender pride?”
- “Does this contribute, or detract from, the Employer Brand we are trying to create?”

Each manager should be held accountable for asking these questions about the processes he or she is responsible for. Each process should be examined step by step, because each step is a Moment of Truth that either helps or hurts your Employer Brand. For instance, each step in your recruiting process communicates to the job applicant something about your organization – for better or for worse.

Commenting on how Everything Matters in the recruiting process, executive recruiter Catherine Swift, of Swift and Associates, a Portland, Maine recruiting firm notes: “Little courtesies make a big impression on candidates. For instance, something as simple as informing a candidate that their next appointment is running late, so they're not just left hanging outside the person's office, wondering when the door will open.” How such moments of truth are handled speak volumes about how much your organization respects people and how competently the organization is run.

### **Do you support, or thwart, excellence?**

Many organizations drive their most talented employees out the door, and into the arms of their competitors, by subjecting them to inadequate technology, insufficient logistical support, and creativity stifling bureaucracy. Although nobody likes to have their efforts at doing good work thwarted, this is even more of a deal-breaker to those who demand

excellence of themselves and others. When they've had enough and leave they become part of their former employer's negative PR firm. Those who stay, simmer silently, with no intention of ever making an employee referral.

For instance, I worked in an insurance company where customer service reps had to do battle everyday with a Byzantine database system that's lack of usability was matched only by its sloth-like speed. Call after call, customer service reps would attempt to wrest the needed information from their computers, while their customer's patience evaporated. Think of how this affected not just job satisfaction – and therefore, turnover – but also what employees told others about their employer. Then compare their experience to the daily experience of Fidelity Investment employees, who use a database and knowledge management system where critical information is just an intuitive mouse click away. Then think of the recruiting implications of both situations.

If you're serious about being a Talent Magnet, your technology, policies and procedures, staffing, logistical support, and training should be examined through the lens of:

- “Does this support, or thwart, excellence?”
- “How does this affect what employees think of our organization and what they tell others?”
- “Does this contribute or detract from the Employer Brand we want?”

### **Do Your Managers Inspire Loyalty, Excellence, and Pride?**

Every interaction employees have with their manager shapes their impression of your organization – for better or for worse. As most people in the business world know by now, Gallup's research shows that an employee's supervisor influences their level of satisfaction and productivity more than any other organizational factor. Curt Coffman and Marcus Buckingham, authors of the best-selling *First Break All the Rule*, and consultants with Gallup Organization, conclude that it's better to work for a great manager in a lousy company, than to work for a lousy manager in a great company. However, the odds of having great managers are better if senior management models, supports, and requires respectful, effective management. This is perhaps the most important area where senior management can influence the Moments of Truth that will either help you become a Talent Magnet or be just another Talent Repellent organization.

Managers should be coached to remember whenever they are dealing with a Moment of Truth to ask:

- “How does the way I'm handling this affect employee morale,

respect, and loyalty?”

- “Would this decision, would this approach, lead to employees feeling proud of, passionate about, and committed to our organization?”

Here are some of the more critical Moments of Truth that managers would be wise to examine, because they’re so frequently mishandled:

- Whether or not employee input is solicited about changes that directly affect their jobs.
- Whether employees hear about changes in a timely way or at the last minute.
- Whether management initiates and executes changes in a well thought out way or acts in an impetuous, fly-by-the-seat-of-the-pants way which they perceive as dynamic and visionary, but which employees see as careless and clueless.
- Whether appreciation and recognition efforts are “done to” employees as gala events or whether appreciation and recognition are a regular part of the manager/employee relationship, and management and employees co-create events that are meaningful to both parties.

### **Do You Have What Today’s Worker Wants?**

Knowing what your customer wants and delivering it is Marketing 101. Smart companies also know that to keep satisfying your customers, you must stay “wired into the voice of the customer,” to use the phrase coined by Richard Whitely, Vice Chairman of The Forum Corporation and author of *The Customer-Driven Company*. Both principles should be applied to your organization’s recruiting efforts. To be a Talent Magnet, you need to know:

- What today’s employees value most in an employer.
- What matters most to the various professions and demographics you desire (e.g. What’s important to a 25 year old graphic designer will be different from what’s important to a 50 year old accountant).
- Whether or not you are delivering what matters most to your employees.
- Whether or not you are addressing the eternal human needs that have always affected employee performance and loyalty, such as the need for meaning, the need to be part of something greater than oneself, the need to learn and grow, and the need to experience mastery and

self-efficacy.

## **Are You Ready To Stop Competing in The Labor Market With Only a Fraction of Your Team?**

Regardless of how effective your recruiting department is, trying to recruit the best employees without senior management being part of your team is like a basketball team trying to compete with only one player on the court. To compete successfully, you need everyone on the team playing in the game. You need everyone to recognize that Everything Matters and pull together to make sure you actually deliver a “product” – in this case, a work experience – that the best employees want. With a product that the best employees want, recruiting becomes infinitely easier. More importantly, when you create a great organization that provides a great work experience, you unleash the secret recruiting weapon of all Employers of Choice: employees who love where they work and love talking about it.

### **What’s Next?**

For this to be more than wishful thinking, you need to recruit senior management onto your team, and together build an organization that is an Employer of Choice. To begin the process, here are four actions you can take:

1. Share this article with your senior management team.
2. Share articles from ERExchange.com and other websites on issues related to Employer Branding, attracting and retaining employees, the role managers play in retention and productivity, the cost of turnover, etc. This doesn’t just help recruit them to your team, this increases your value to senior management. Why? First, you multiply your value exponentially if you’re part of the process that gets everyone involved in making your organization a Talent Magnet, and therefore unleashes your volunteer recruiting team (your workforce). Second, by helping them identify the factors that are impeding your organization’s ability to recruit and retain the best people, you will help management save a tremendous amount of money in recruiting and turnover costs, not to mention opportunity costs.
3. Encourage your CEO or other senior executive to facilitate ongoing discussions around the principle of “Everything Matters,” and to work with managers on making sure their processes and actions are contributing to a powerful Employer Brand.
4. Start and maintain an Employer Advisory Council. Involve them in exploring the above questions. Work with them regularly to stay wired into your workforce. Doing so will help management make decisions that strengthen your Employer Brand. It will also inspire passion and commitment, because instead of being just hired hands,

your employees get to be players on a winning team.

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**About the Author:** David Lee is a consultant, speaker, and executive coach. The founder of HumanNature@Work, he has worked with organizations and presented at conferences throughout North America and overseas. He is the author of *Managing Employee Stress and Safety*, as well as dozens of articles on employee and organizational performance.

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**For More Information:**

David Lee, President  
HumanNature@Work  
P.O. Box 430  
Bar Mills, Maine 04004  
Tel: 207-929-3344  
E-mail: [info@HumanNatureAtWork.com](mailto:info@HumanNatureAtWork.com)

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