

## Recognize your most valuable asset

Employers need to ensure healthy workplaces and appreciation for employees

This newsletter is written at a time in society where we have been faced with unthinkable loss of life. This includes the passing of many young people from the Humboldt Broncos hockey team as a result of a bus crash (Saskatchewan, Canada); the killing of innocent pedestrians on Younge Street by a van plowing into them on a sidewalk (Toronto, Ontario), and numerous other losses resulting from car collisions, natural disasters (e.g., floods), and missing children.

Such loss of human life has made many people recognize what is truly important since we are faced with the reality that tomorrow is never a guarantee. Parents may now hug their children before they leave the house in the morning, spouses/partners may say “I love you” more than before, and we are hearing of strangers reaching out to each other engaging in random acts of kindness.

Today’s workplaces would be wise to learn from what is happening at the individual level. Many workplaces reflect unhealthy environments and toxic work cultures where employees are not valued.

Several of my clients have been off work on a mental health related disability due to an unhealthy work atmosphere fraught with interpersonal conflict, issues around control,

and lack of respect for one another. Indeed, by the time clients are referred to ERGO-Wise for cognitive work hardening to prepare for their return to work, their depression symptoms have typically improved yet many remain apprehensive about returning to work typically due to the work milieu they left, their concerns regarding its role in their initial disability leave, and their trepidation about returning to the same atmosphere.



Angry unsupportive boss

Clients at ERGO-Wise learn strategies that equip them with some tools to help them once back at work. In addition to adjusting to a work routine and rebuilding cognitive abilities, clients learn strategies for more effective communication. They

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Adeena is an award winning occupational therapist and founder of ERGO-Wise. She specializes in return-to-work preparation for people experiencing reduced cognitive abilities (e.g. concentration), persistent fatigue, and lack of a routine following a disability such as depression, cancer, and post-concussion.

## Some companies lead by example

**Dofasco** (steel company): motto is “Our strength is our people.”

**Full Contact** (software company): pays their employees to take a vacation believing that this is healthy and will pay back in committed employees.

**Southwest Airlines**: promote employee engagement at different levels; CEO gives a weekly public ‘shout out’ to employees who have gone the extra mile; a monthly recognition for stand out employee.

**Chevron** (oil/gas): demonstrates caring about their employees through on site health & fitness centers or through health-club memberships; health oriented programs (e.g., massages, personal training); insistence on regular breaks.

## Employees are assets

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may learn assertiveness skills. They may learn about different personality types and how to interact with different people. They may better understand the bully-victim paradigm which empowers them to better manage a difficult work environment.

Not all employers lack insight into their human resource assets. There are many employers that recognize that their employees are their biggest advantage and indeed foster a caring, respectful, and inclusive environment. These employers empower employees. They are collaborative and inclusive. Ideal employers welcome input and value diverse ideas and opinions.



Collaboration between employer and employee

These employers can model talent management, human capital investment, and strategic thinking with a view towards significant payoff in terms of employee commitment, enhanced work performance, and the bottom line.

Whether it is appreciating those in our personal lives or those at work, the underlying matter is recognition of the value of people. Once we collectively realize that human beings are important and are to be cherished, then we start

to become a more inclusive and respectful society which ultimately benefits all of us. Many are on the right track. More need to follow this trajectory to tap into unrecognized talent and human potential.



### References

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ERGO-Wise's hallmark **cognitive work hardening program (bridge2work™)** has helped hundreds of clients return to work by helping them rebuild cognitive abilities needed to meet job demands, adjust to a work schedule, and address coping strategies including effective communication and organizational skills.

**Services are provided within a non-clinical  
simulated work setting**

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