

THE WEST REPORT

Charting Pathways to Excellence

*A publication for clients and friends of M. H. West & Co., Inc.
Vol. III, No. 1*

January 1, 2000,

NEW YEARS EDITION

The 21st Century... Will Your Employees Build Space Ships or Model-T's?

There are many forces and trends that will affect how employees function and contribute to an organization's success in the next century. Among these are the economy, technology, and political and social trends. Increased globalization and significant growth in technology are affecting where, how long, and how quickly employees complete their work.

Technology is changing the concept of time by allowing organizations to provide services 24 hours a day all over the world through the Internet and other information appliances such as smart phones, high definition TV, networked computers, robots, cable modems, and wearable computers. While there are clear business advantages resulting from new technology, there is also a need to address the adverse effects of technology on employees who are working longer hours and away from traditional office locations.

Cars with internet, e-mail, and voice mail access will soon not be the exception. Cellular phones already now feature e-mail and internet option and laptop computers can be taken almost anywhere with the increasing use of wireless networks.

So while your employees now have capability to build space ships, build them quickly and to do so from any place on earth, are you and your employees more comfortable building Model-T's? The challenge to business will be helping employees maintain healthy work/life balances. Investing in techniques and approaches that determine employee job satisfaction levels and developing training and education programs that emphasize leadership, teamwork, effective communications and stress management will be conducive to this goal.

Recruiting, retaining and motivating workers will depend on what type of work culture and environment your company creates to enable employees to balance their job with their family life. For example, telecommuting has become a popular option for both employees and employers. The number of people that performed some work from home grew by 89% from 1991 to 1997. In 1997, 3.6 million people did some telecommuting from home and the figures today are estimated to be even higher. At the same time telecommuting presents some challenges such as workers' compensation and liability issues.

So what does M. H. West & Co., Inc. suggest that you do to help you and your employees find the balance between building space ships and Model-T's?

TOOL BOX TIPS

- **Educate your employees about the impact of the economy, technology, employment and political/social trends on their work/home life.**
- **Recognize the potential pitfalls of the technological advancement and account for them by making efforts to improve productivity, work/life balance, and creativity.**
- **Research human resources practices to learn more about workforce management in businesses at home and in other countries. Incorporate best practices into your organization.**
- **Publicize your company's diversity and fair employment practices as a mechanism for employee recruitment.**
- **Monitor economic, technological, employment, and political/social trends and share your experiences with others.**
- **Identify both monetary and non-monetary methods to compensate employees.**
- **Let employees know how much you appreciate them and seek their advice on operations and other matters that affect the company.**
- **Conduct employee satisfaction surveys to determine views about employment and how well employees interact with customers and clients.**
- **Create employee training opportunities that strengthen skill levels, loyalty/commitment and customer service.**