

Published by Thomson Reuters Canada Ltd.

Looking ahead to HR in 2009

Editor's note: Canadian HR Reporter asked six experts, who are all members of the Strategic Capability Network, an association that provides a forum for leading-edge thinking and practice on HR management, what 2009 might hold in store for the profession. Here's what they had to say.



Sue Nador

Re-engagement strategies for gloomier times

Without a doubt, 2009 will be a glum year for many organizations, particularly those facing layoffs. And when the dust settles, some may be quick to assume employees who still have jobs are the lucky ones, but it may not feel that way from the perspective of “survivors.”

Many of us have lived through other recessions and know life is not so easy for the ones left standing. How many times have you heard people say they are “crazy busy” or doing two jobs?

Employee engagement has been a hot topic for years. The focus has been on developing strategies to keep people happy and motivated so they con-

tribute to the best of their abilities, develop a deep sense of commitment and stick around. In the new economy, the mindset can easily shift to: “Employees should be happy to have a job, shouldn't they?” Some organizations may start to believe the employer value proposition doesn't need to go beyond this. But employee engagement is just as important now as before.

The good news? It doesn't have to come with the bells and whistles characteristic of the “employer of choice” heyday when every organization was trying to outdo the others. This is an opportunity to re-engage in simpler, inexpensive yet equally effective ways to achieve organizational effectiveness. In chaotic times, people need a renewed sense of purpose. Many will be facing the challenge of assuming more work and new roles within the organization.

Now is the time for leaders to have in-depth conversations with their teams about new priorities and performance expectations, and how to achieve goals with fewer resources and people.

They should define what success now looks like and how it will be measured. And they need to demonstrate a human touch in recognizing employees and celebrating significant milestones.

Leaders need to facilitate the transition of employees to new challenges and roles. Orientation is as important for internal candidates, who may be witnessing their organization from a different perspective and experiencing a different subculture, as it is for external hires.

By providing this type of support when the going is rough, organizations build the goodwill that will keep employees committed when the good times roll again.

Sue Nador is co-chair of programming at SCNetwork, responsible for the development and delivery of the programming curriculum, and is also on the national board. She is a Partner at NVision Consulting in Toronto. For more information, visit www.nvisionconsulting.ca.