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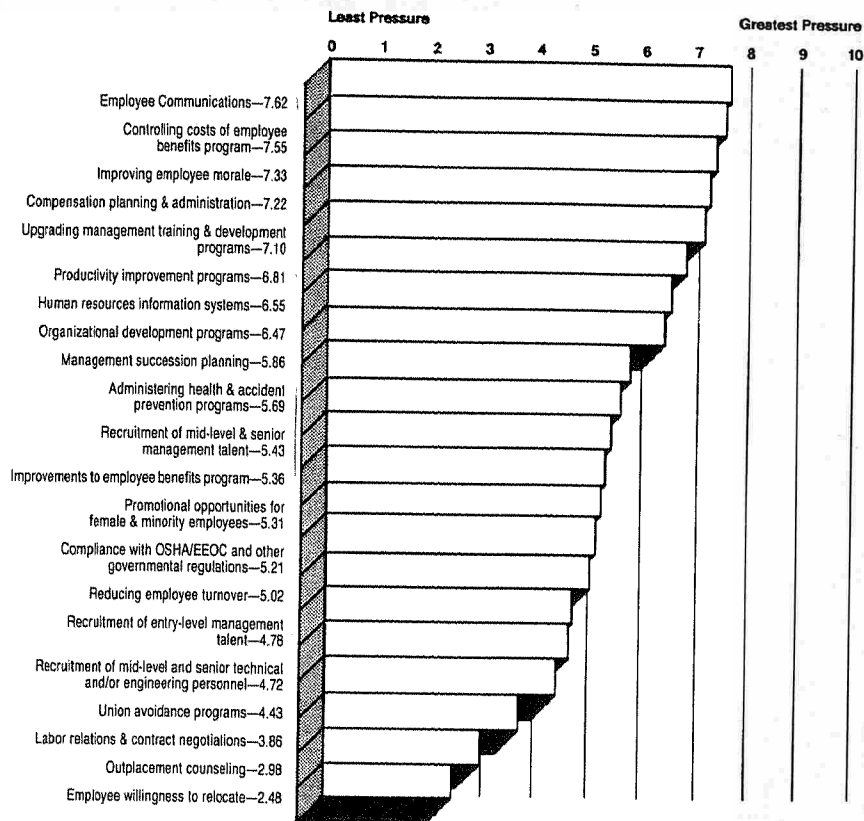
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n Practice

1987 Top Level Human Resources Executive Pressure Points Study

470 Responses



Source: Fleming Associates, Executive Search Consultants

HRD Execs Rate Top Concerns

Employee discontent has pushed communication and morale to the top of the list of tough issues U.S. human resource development executives will face this year. According to a survey conducted by Fleming Associates of HRD executives at 470 companies, strengthening employee communication and boosting employee morale come first on their list of priorities for 1987.

Fleming researchers note a number of key shifts in the leading "pressure points" since 1985, when they made a similar survey. Surveyed executives rate problems on a scale of 10 for most critical to 1 for least critical. Current top problems are illustrated in the figure above.

In addition to overall benefits cost control, the HRD executives say they face steadily rising pressures on a related problem—administering health and accident prevention programs. This pressure point rose from nineteenth in a 1983 survey to fifteenth in 1985 and is tenth for 1987.

Another developing problem exposed in the current survey actually may reflect an improving economy. "Recruitment of entry-level management talent" moved from twenty-second to eighteenth.

Ominously, perhaps, HRD executives no longer agree with their CEOs when it comes to rating pressure points. Says Fleming Associates President Richard Fleming, "In two key areas human resource executives are out of sync with the CEO as compared

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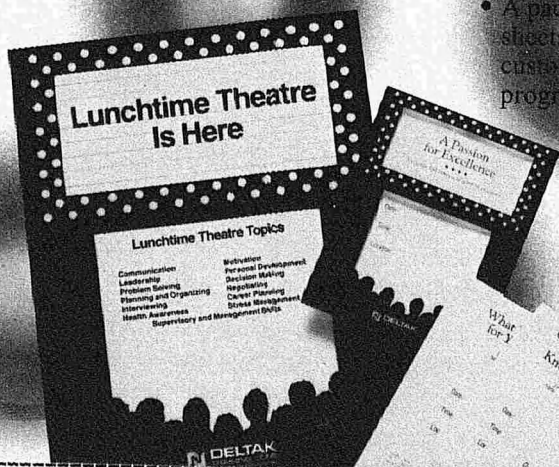
- Tom Brokaw in *Iacocca: An American Profile*
- Tom Peters in *A Passion for Excellence*
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to our earlier studies: The chief executive rates productivity improvement as the second most critical issue, while the human resource executive now rates it sixth. Organizational development is ranked fourth by the CEO, eighth by the human resource executive.

"Planning for top management succession is the eighth highest priority for the CEO and a closely aligned ninth for the HR executive."

The survey also asked the chief HRD executives to name the single most important problem they will face in 1987. Problems they named include the effect of and compliance with tax reform, experiencing a merger, building a corporate culture, improving management quality, and government-mandated benefits programs.

These executives added comments reflecting their particular corporate situations. One said, "to manage change in a rapidly growing young company is difficult," while another indicated, "we want to be more sensitive to the emerging differences in the labor force." Another executive reported that "quality goals need management change, which is hard to achieve."

The survey showed that 470 respondents have been in their positions for an average of 8.6 years, with 59 percent falling in the 35- to 49-year-old age group. The polled group represents an average company size of \$908 million, ranging from \$1 million to \$30 billion.

Copies of the complete survey are available by request from Norman Mitchell, executive vice president, Fleming Associates, 9040 Roswell Road, Atlanta, GA 30339.

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T6

Workplace Substance Abuse: Epidemic or Scare?

If you rely on sensational magazine covers, newspaper headlines, or their video equivalents for your news, then one of the strongest images in your mind is likely the picture of a U.S. hooked on drugs. What you may have overlooked are reports in these pages and elsewhere indicating that drug use has, in fact, been dropping during this media brouhaha. Why, then, the current drug scare?

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Are drugs by themselves really the problem?

History shows that today's panicky attention to national drug habits isn't the first time Americans have flagged the topic. Writing in the March 28 issue of *The Nation*, authors Harry Levine and Craig Reinerman explain that "The first and most commonly scapegoated drug was alcohol. In the nineteenth century the temperance movement persuaded tens of millions of people that alcohol was responsible for most of the poverty, crime, violence, mental illness, moral degeneracy, broken families, and individual failure in industrializing America. In the twentieth century prohibitionists promised that a constitutional amendment banning alcohol would empty the prisons and mental hospitals and insure lasting prosperity."

Burgeoning abuse of "bathtub" alcohol and alternative drugs coupled with the economic hardships of the Great Depression helped put an end to those prohibitionist fantasies—and to prohibition itself. Organized crime gained an as-yet unmovable foothold in America during prohibition, and poverty's hold on the land didn't loosen until the postwar years.

Writes Levine, a professor of sociology at Queens College, City University of New York, and Reinerman, author of *American States of Mind* and professor of sociology at Northeastern University in Boston, "Many big companies in the early twentieth century supported anti-liquor crusades arguing that temperance would increase worker productivity.

"Today, nearly half the *Fortune*-500 companies use blood or urine tests to screen employees or job applicants for illicit drug use. Corporations justify the tests on the grounds of efficiency and competitiveness; meanwhile, the examinations also intimidate workers and allow management surveillance over employees' private lives."

Those "who are trying to stop the tests have so far won 13 out of 17 court cases involving government employees," report Levine and Reinerman, "but there are other battles to come."

The authors, of course, are not blind to what *is* a drug problem: "The percentage of people who have used cocaine once or more increased substantially from 1970 to 1980, although it has leveled off since then.

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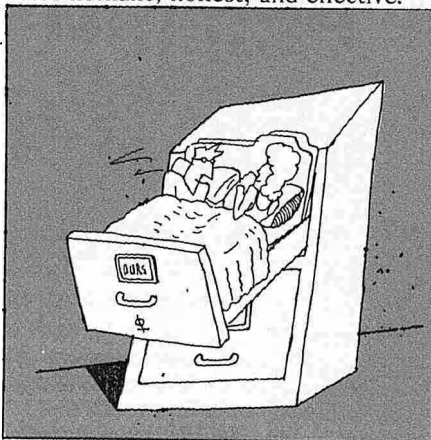
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n Practice

Many people certainly abuse drugs and do lasting physical or psychological damage to themselves and others." But "a sense of proportion is missing from current discussions about drug problems.

"The physical, psychological, and economic damage done by legal drugs still dwarfs the damage done by illicit drugs."

Drug scares and prohibition have a poor—even counterproductive—track record when it comes to curbing substance abuse. Obscured are the "intractable social and economic problems that underlie drug abuse. Dealing drugs, after all, is often correctly perceived by poor city kids as the highest-paying job they will ever get." When the scare is over, hope the authors, "it may be possible to return to a policy discussion about drugs that is more humane, honest, and effective."



David Pevlairs

Managing the Business-Spouse Relationship

Married couples, who increasingly have gone into business together in recent years, find that managing a business relationship is every bit as difficult as managing a marriage—perhaps even more so. To make these business relationships work, reports the National Business Institute (NBI), those couples who choose to go into business together must set basic ground rules as soon as possible if inevitable problems and tensions are to be minimized.

NBI research shows that the number of married couples going into business together has been growing at about a 20 percent rate annually for the last few years; the total number of couples jointly operating sole proprietorships should

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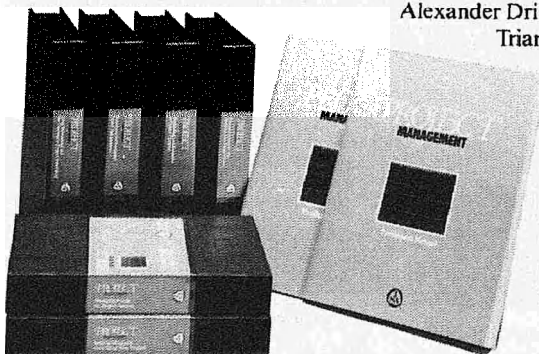
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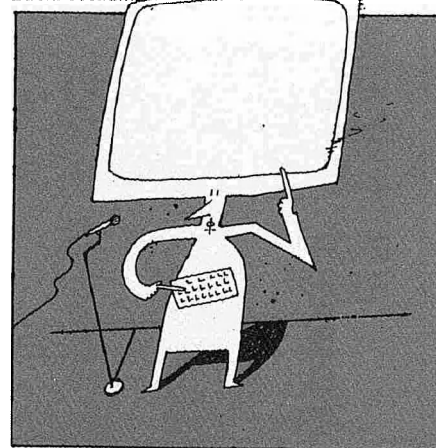
pass 500,000 by this time next year.

Significantly, NBI's figures do not include the traditional Mom and Pop grocery store around the corner. NBI's businesses, in which the wife is an equal partner and not relegated to merely a support role, include such yuppie-style enterprises as photo labs, country inns, and private schools.

Most business partnerships of this sort begin with writing a well-thought-out business plan to forecast capital requirements and a survival strategy. NBI adds, however, that each partner's responsibilities must be carefully delineated at the outset—especially for the woman who one day may need the legal protection of a contract stipulating ownership percentages, salaries, and job functions. The folks at NBI also suggest that the partners objectively consider the talents of each in dividing up job responsibilities and, in addition, delineate household responsibilities—as in taking out the garbage and cleaning the bathroom floor—to keep friction in the personal sphere to a minimum.

For more information on the subject, contact Joyce Reid, Department 121-I, National Business Institute, 90 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10011-7696.

David Provilaitis



Lapping Up Your PC

Submitted by Matt M. Starcevic of the Center for Management and Organization Effectiveness in Bartlesville, Oklahoma.

A lap-top PC can add important dimensions to your next meeting—and free you of cumbersome flip charts.

Facilitators often brainstorm lists of ideas and take action notes on flip charts that they later transcribe for mailing to participants. But this process creates some unnecessary problems.

For example, even if you immediately type and mail the meeting notes using an overnight service, the minimum lag time is two days. And once they get those transcriptions in the mail, participants are more likely to file them than use them as a guide to action.

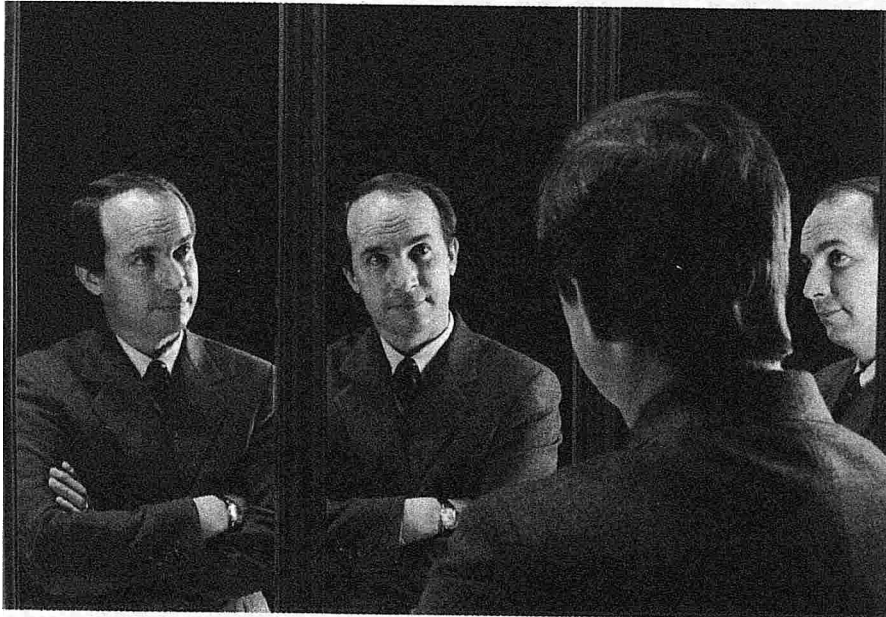
The notes simply may not reflect content. Enter the lap-top PC.

Consider this arrangement: The facilitator or manager has jacked the lap-top PC into a giant screen television and printer. A spread-sheet software will allow for multiple lists to be

displayed quickly for participant input and review. Separate lists or action notes are created on the spot in full view of all. They can be edited immediately to reflect the area being listed.

The lap's low profile allows the facilitator to maintain eye contact with participants; the screen need only be checked after the final product has been typed. A hard copy of the file can be printed for immediate small-group discussion, for overnight review, or as a final document. With no lag time or misrepresentation, the transcription and mailing steps have been eliminated.

For off-site meetings, the facilitator only needs to worry about transporting a 10-pound PC with the top-surface dimensions of a legal-size sheet of paper. The costs of the lap-top PC are far less than a "white board" or of having someone stand by to transcribe notes. Some hotels even provide giant-screen televisions and printers.



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Executive Programs

University-business partnerships are nothing new. [See "Technology-Assisted Adult Learning: Profile of a Partnership," on page 98 of this issue, for one example.—ED.] But some of the oldest such relationships also have proved to be the most innovative. For instance, Columbia University in New York City, under the auspices of their Graduate School of Business's executive programs, this year is offering several interesting short courses covering business strategy (July 12 to 24), management of financial services (November 1 to 6), and international strategy (November 8 to 13). Courses already held this year included managing maturing businesses and managing strategic innovation and change.

Courses are run by Columbia faculty and enriched by participation of business and government leaders and experts as well as professors from other Columbia divisions, other universities, and business-related professions. For information call or write to Columbia Executive Programs, Graduate School of Business, 324 Uris Hall, Columbia University, New York, NY 10027; 212/280-3395.

Employee Assistance Programs for Workers Boost Bottom Line

As many as 80 percent of the Fortune-500 companies now have employee assistance programs (EAPs)

to help workers with personal problems. According to The Bureau of National Affairs, Inc. (BNA), there are about 10,000 such programs today compared to only 40 in 1950.

EAP advocates claim dollar savings of as much as 17 cents for every dollar spent in terms of improvements in

worker absenteeism, decreases in worker's compensation claims, and accidents. EAPs characteristically offer workers a professional assessment of their difficulty, often coupled with short-term counseling and referral to longer-term therapy.

BNA has produced a report detailing possible benefits—and pitfalls—associated with setting up an EAP. The report addresses several controversial issues including the role of EAPs in the corporate drug testing movement, the conflict between health maintenance organizations and EAPs, and possible legal problems such as confidentiality of records and liability for malpractice. The special problems faced by EAPs in reaching top executives and professionals also are discussed, as well as the special factors that must be considered in establishing programs for public sector employees.

For information on purchasing BNA's report and licensing or renting a related documentary, call the BNA response center toll-free at 800/372-1033.



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