


# NEWS YOU CAN USE

## The Future of Work

By Eva Kaplan-Leiserson

Where is work going in this world of rapid change? How will new paradigms and technologies affect people's jobs? It's time for another installment in what's becoming an annual update on workplace trends.

 News You Can Use, May 2001  
New staffing strategies. Skilled worker shortages, layoffs—both are current realities. To combat staff-

ing's rollercoaster ride, employers are looking at innovative solutions.

For labor shortages, some companies are developing contingency plans to delay projects or pass extra work on to other firms. Others are interviewing employee candidates and then keeping them on call until needed.

Companies that must reduce their staffing costs, as

well as those with staff shortages, are finding labor sharing an attractive option. Pilot programs in Texas and Arizona let employers lend a portion of workers' time to a labor pool, from which other companies can hire people for part-time hours. Employees benefit by learning new skills and competencies.

Collaboration. The traditional hierarchical model of

It's a brave new world—now.

business with teams designed and led top-down is fading. Instead, workers themselves are developing teams as needed in a bottom-up approach. And they're using technology such as Groove to meet and work together virtually. Important skills for the collaborative approach: negotiation, persuasion, coordination, and networking.

**Company-specific degrees.** Corporations are working with colleges and universities to develop customized degree programs; existing graduate programs are modified to include company-specific examples and projects. Teaching is online or in traditional classrooms. Proponents say the degrees are just as rigorous, and the collaboration ensures that employers who pay for continuing education receive a highly relevant return-on-investment.

**The office of the future.** The vision, called Bluespace and developed by IBM and furniture company Steelcase, is this: an office that adjusts automatically to your preferences in temperature and body position. It also keeps track of whether you're in, out, or busy and notifies your colleagues accordingly. Steelcase execs say they're trying to "integrate architecture, furniture, and technology to let users control their environment."

**Biometric timeclock.** Have you ever thought of asking a co-worker to clock in for you? Not a chance. This machine reads your fingerprints to sign you in. Managers can log in to the system throughout the day to check who's in or out, and the timeclock compiles reports for payroll administrators.

If some of these trends seem far out, take heed. They're not as far off on the horizon as you may think.

# Survey Says

How do people prefer to commute to work?

Given the choice, most people would walk (37 %).

The other figures:

- train, 25 %
- car, 21 %
- bike, 13 %
- bus, 5 %

Source/the American Planning Association, [www.planning.org](http://www.planning.org)

## More Info

Here's where you can learn more about these trends:

**Staffing strategies.** [www.hermangroup.com/alert/archive\\_3-6-2002.html](http://www.hermangroup.com/alert/archive_3-6-2002.html) and [www.bna.com/products/hr/btmn.htm](http://www.bna.com/products/hr/btmn.htm),

select free trial of *Bulletin to Management* and access 1/31/02 article, "By Sharing Workers..." in archives.

**Collaboration.** [www.hermangroup.com/alert/archive\\_4-3-2002.html](http://www.hermangroup.com/alert/archive_4-3-2002.html)

**Company-specific degrees.** <http://chronicle.com>, must register (not free) and search for 1/28/02 article, "Colleges Tailor Online Degrees..."

**The office of the future.** [www.nytimes.com/2002/01/14/technology/14NECO.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2002/01/14/technology/14NECO.html), must register (free).

**Biometric timeclock.** Search [nytimes.com](http://nytimes.com) for "biometric," select "Past Year." Must purchase article, "Tracking Work Hours By Touch..."

# How To Decision Making 101

By Jason Womack

Stuck on a tough issue? Try one or more of these techniques for quicker and more effective decisions.

**Decide immediately.** Determine what action you're going to take next, no matter how small. Transfer the action out of your head onto a to-do list or other system you review at least daily.

**Collect intelligence.** Lack of information can be a stumbling block. Take 15 to 30 minutes to gather data. Then review in terms of your decision.

**Talk about it.** Meet with two to four colleagues and pass out a written description of the issue. Brainstorm for 10 to 20 minutes, then decide on the next step.

**Sleep on it.** Clear your mind by writing down all of your initial ideas. Then write on a 3-by-5 card a clear description of the issue. Read the card several times before going to sleep for two or three nights.

**Think outside the box.** Bring the issue to another department in your company or a group of people at least one generation older or younger than you are. Ask them what they would do.

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## Policy News

A snapshot of U.S. federal legislation and policy affecting workforce development and the HRD profession.

### House Passes Digital Tech Corps Act

The Digital Tech Corps Act of 2002 (HR 3925), introduced by Rep. Tom Davis (R-VA), passed in the House of Representatives on April 10. This legislation would create an IT worker exchange program between the federal government and the private sector, developing expertise in information technology management. This proposal for a public-private partnership would help promote the use of best practices in the federal government. Under this legislation, federal IT workers would be allowed to spend up to two years in corporate positions, while private-sector employees would be invited to work at government agencies, with the goal of exchanging information and improving operations.

### The Good News

Seventy-five percent of employees surveyed in Dale Carnegie training worldwide said they'd blow the whistle on unethical management practices in their company. Is it Enron's legacy, or was the world always so ethical? You decide.

### The Bad News

Workplace discrimination in the United States against Muslims—and people of Arab and Asian descent assumed to be Muslim—is at an all-time high.

The Council on American-Islamic Relations has received almost six times as many complaints since September 11 as it did in all of 2000. The reports point to workplace bias, airport profiling, discrimination in

schools, and physical assault.

The number of complaints to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission is unprecedented and has caused the EEOC to create a new category, Code Z, to track them.

Can diversity training help? For information on designing and implementing training,



"Redefining Diversity" (T+D, December 2001)



Source/CCH Human Resources Management

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