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a monthly newsletter to key executive-leaders on practices, possibilities and ideas generally for stepped up performance  
edited by  
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*Our Best Wishes to you and your nearest and dearest  
for a Prosperous & Peaceful Year*

*Please Refer to Page 8 For Very Special Discount Offer*

### 3821 MAN OF THE YEAR

Come December, media thinks of 'the man of the year'. Each publication has its focus. 'The Week' looks at people who operate as an one man army to make a difference for a large number of the disadvantaged. Despite the fact he/she does not have official power or position.

We take special notice of this feature because it reminds us that we have a fair number of people in our country who have time and thought for the less advantaged, who go for relentless giving of their best, just giving.

In the 16th in the series, we have Rajendra Singh of Rajasthan as The Man of the Year. (For a detailed account, please see The Week of Dec.27, 1998). Here we give a few short extracts.

#### Glimpses of Achievement since 1985

- The TBS project area was a 'dark zone'. It meant there was no underground water. Now the government calls it a 'white zone' implying plenty of water. The average water level was 200 feet below; now it is 20 feet!

- In 1985 more than 80 per cent of the area faced soil erosion. Now it is 5 per cent. Forest cover has increased from 12 per cent to 50 per cent.
- Earlier the farmers grew chana and sarson in rabi and jowar- bajra in kharif. Now they grow wheat, barley, sugarcane and vegetables in rabi, and corn, arhar, jowar, kala jeeree and vegetables in kharif. During the zaid rabi-late winter sowing- they grow kharbooza, lauki, tarbooz and fodder. Production has gone up by ten times.
- Earlier 80 per cent of men in the 17-40 age group in the Sariska area used to migrate. Migration has stopped, and men are returning.
- The girls are going to school. Very few did before 1985. Women have become entrepreneurs and are taking leadership in society.
- The villagers used to buy most things from the market. Now they supply grain, vegetables, ghee, cotton and salt. Their purchase is limited to small quantities of chemical fertilisers, finished cloth, and kerosene.

**FROM AN INTERVIEW**

**WHERE DO YOU DRAW YOUR INSPIRATION FROM?**

I have not seen or met Bapu. But I have read him. I was into social work even as a child, I was in JP's movement, I understood Bhoodan. All this was my education. Gandhi is the biggest inspiration.

**ANY DIFFERENCES WITH GANDHI, CONSIDERING THAT TIMES HAVE CHANGED?**

I don't even feel competent to comment on Gandhi. He was a Mahatma, a yugpurush, I am an ordinary man. But there are small differences.

In 1909 he had the nation debate on mechanisation. But it remained a debate all his life, he could not give it a practical direction. If you say there is threat to the nation from the trains, buses, diesel, you should offer an alternative to them. Scientists of that time should have addressed that. Same goes for energy. Because of his loftiness in thought he missed some of the ground realities. We are more practical than philosophical.

Gandhi spoke of gram swaraj and ganraj but the Constitution has no place for village autonomy. Everyone used to listen to Gandhi, so he could well have got it included. Had that been done, the state of the nation would have been different today. After Independence, much has been taken from the villages, but nothing has been given to the villages.

We are ordinary workers who cannot carry the ideological burden of Gandhi. But we do follow the path shown by him, and try to make people stand on their own feet.

**HOW?**

Gandhi spoke of self-reliance in agriculture and textiles, and approached it through the charkha. It became the symbol of Independence, but he did not invent it. It was the weapon of the old mothers of our villages. Likewise we are using people's weapons. Gandhi wanted the country to learn from nature; he said nature can feed our needs, not greed. We are inspired by that. But we are not Gandhivadi. We have trees and ponds exclusively for birds and animals.

**WHAT WERE YOUR GREATEST CHALLENGES?**

One is the prevailing system, the laws which are obsolete. They do not allow the villagers to do what they want for their development. If they dig a small pond, the government declares it illegal. If the village is not strong, it meekly backs down. We took a lot of time to make the villages strong. The main obstruction is from the government.

**HOW DO YOU OVERCOME IT?**

So far we have done it by slowly strengthening the villages and making government officials understand the rationale of our work. As per the Forest and Wildlife Protection Act, we could not have made the 200 water harvesting structures in Sariska National Park. But after we did it, the government appreciated it, though they had earlier served demolition notices. Some officers are sensitive and understand, most are not. But we carry on.

**BUT YOU HAVE RESORTED TO AGITATIONS**

Yes, but we don't rely too much on agitation. We believe in using people's own weapons. When we were fighting the forest officials in Mandalvas the people in all the villages in Sariska forests decided to have akhand Ramayan to demonstrate our unity and strength. **Villagers don't believe in strikes and holdups that disrupt life.** All our protests were satyagrahas.

**WHAT RESISTANCE DID YOU FACE IN THE BEGINNING?**

When people did not know us, they had no confidence in us. There was distrust because of the political system, because of the looting tendency of traders. But later, the resistance was from local politicians, not ordinary people.

**HOW IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE GOVERNMENT NOW?**

Not linking it with any particular political party, I will say our work has come to be recognized and appreciated. There is some fight because of corruption in the government. But they are coming to us with the idea of cooperation, as in the case of PAWDI. The society and the government are trying to get together.

*DID YOU EVER FEEL LIKE QUITTING?*

Not even on the day I thought I would not survive. That was when we were attacked. Yes, once in a while we do worry about when and how the society will understand. But I never thought of going back to Jaipur.

*CAN THIS WORK BE REPLICATED ELSEWHERE?*

This is designed for this area. But water harvesting anywhere has to be based on the same principle. It can be done on the Vindhya, the Western Ghats, anywhere in the world. If harvested properly, rainwater alone can meet all our water requirements even in the cities. This can be done at a very low cost. Many people in Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh are trying it out.

*CAN THIS BE THE ALTERNATIVE TO ISRAELI FARMING TECHNOLOGY THAT IS BEING ADOPTED IN INDIA?*

Those are not sustainable in India. The traditional water harvesting system is suited to our land. It is cost-effective, and capable of providing employment to our people.

**3822 COMMON DILEMMA: BEING RIGHT OR BEING KIND**

*Since we deal with people, what applies in one part of the world can in good part apply in another part, with minor modification can be. That is where you may find this item relevant.*

Picture this: You have an employee who has been with you for more than a year, and this guy has done a marvelous job. Then you uncover proof that he lied about his educational background in order to meet the job requirements. It turns out that he doesn't really have an MBA and, in truth, never finished college. What do you do?

There's a case to be made for immediately firing the employee - not the one who lied, the bureaucrat who wrote the job requirements!

But that was not the conclusion the employers reached. They chose to dismiss the fellow who falsified his application, and then they replaced him with a dullard who has all the credentials and half the vision.

I mentioned this instance to Dennis Van Norman, a human resources consultant in Minneapolis, and he responded with this episode: Van Norman was doing the hiring for a large hospital. He interviewed a young man for a job in the computer department who was two years out of college. When asked about those two years, the fellow explained that he and a friend had gone off to pursue a dream. The two had talked throughout college of heading out West to open a restaurant, and upon graduation did just that - they ventured out to California and started an Italian restaurant.

After two years, they realized there were better chefs than accountants and ran out of money. Now, with that out of his system, he was ready to return home and get on with a large organization, a place where he could work his way up.

Although this background was unconventional, Van Norman and his cohorts gave him points for being entrepreneurial and gave the kid a chance. Then, a couple of years later, Van Norman rode his motorcycle to a company softball game and the former restaurateur asked to try it out. He then demonstrated a mastery of motorcycles.

When Van Norman asked where he had learned to ride, the young employee replied, "Can I tell you something? That story about the restaurant in California wasn't the truth. I went to California with my friend all right, but we didn't open a restaurant. We spent two years riding motorcycles and doing drugs. After that I knew I was done with drugs and running wild, but I realized that if I told the truth, no one would believe me, so I made up a story that couldn't be checked out."

Van Norman could have fired the fellow, and I suppose there are many who would say he should have axed him on the spot.

Instead, Van Norman recalls him as "the best employee I ever hired", and adds that the guy went on to become nationally known in his field.

So what's the conclusion to reach from this? That lying is OK? That maybe lying is even a good sign, since it is, by its very nature, inventive? No, the goal is still honesty. I've adopted for myself the standard set by Earl

Wilson when he described a person as "so honest you could play craps with him over the phone".

But let's look again at the first case, where a talented person was tossed on principle. Because I do some work with the company, I tried to get him reinstated. Sure, it was hopeless, but I tried.

The bureaucrat who'd done the firing scoffed at me, saying, "We have rules. Do you want me to be hypocritical?"

And I replied, "Yes. That would be an improvement."

After all, hypocrisy can be a form of humility, an experiment in open-mindedness. But a bureaucrat doesn't believe in making exceptions. Then again, a bureaucrat doesn't understand that everything great is an exception. A bureaucrat sees only the well-worn middle of the path taken.

So what is the place of rules? Wayne Dyer wrote, "In a choice between being right and being kind, choose kind." There's a philosophy of life in that sentence, and also the answer to many management dilemmas. And what conclusion can we reach from the two employment stories? I say it's this: It's not OK to lie ... but it is OK to forgive.

*by Dale Dauten  
in Arizona Bus. Gazette*

### **3823 SABBATICAL - A PRIME BENEFIT**

*Though we are not as badly off as those in the west in respect of our annual holidays, we are catching up in this respect as in many other respects. People want to give their best to their organisations. They (especially knowledge professionals) also want a little time off for something dear to them. This is where sabbatical has relevance.*

Franca Miraglia felt the hair on her arms stand up when she first heard professional actors reciting lines from her play.

Ms. Miraglia wrote *Life on a Diet* in stolen moments over the past decade. Her day job is public relations director at Toronto-based software firm Alias/Wavefront Inc.

Since the company offers employees a six-week sabbatical every four years, she'll spend part of this summer producing *Life on a Diet* for the Toronto Fringe festival. She describes the work as "a comedy-drama about girlfriends, sisters, sex and chocolate."

"It gave me goose bumps," says Ms. Miraglia, 36, recalling the first auditions to cast her production. "To hear your words being said by really talented actors, I was shocked. I almost didn't recognize them as my words."

That's the kind of emotional charge high-tech companies such as Alias/Wavefront hope sabbaticals will give their employees. They want them to come back energized and creatively stimulated.

Of course, not everyone uses a sabbatical to produce a play. Some people travel the world, play golf, and just lie in a hammock watching their toes tan.

But the goal is the same: They need to recover from the rigors of long hours in a highly competitive, constantly changing environment.

Alias/Wavefront and its parent, Silicon Graphics Inc. of Mountain View, Calif., offer employees six weeks of paid leave every four years. They can augment the sabbatical with two weeks of vacation. Xerox Corp. offers a year of unpaid sabbatical every few years, during which time benefits and jobs - or comparable jobs - are maintained.

The technology industry's attitude toward sabbaticals was born of search done years ago on worker burnout in Silicon Valley.

"They were finding that people were burning out after four or five years," says James Barr, director of human resources at Silicon Graphics Canada Ltd.

But more than just offering the extended time off, companies have to make sure people take it, and make sure they take it the right way.

"It's enforced time off," Mr Barr says. "If you don't use it, you lose it."

During a sabbatical, Silicon graphics' employees are banned from the office. They don't have access to corporate voice-mail or E-mail, and managers are not allowed to call

people who are on sabbatical unless there is a dire emergency.

How dire? "Something close to death," Mr. Barr says. "There's almost no business reason that would come up."

The business reasons for a sabbatical are mostly intangible, and calculating the costs is difficult, companies say. The benefits do not accrue - they are taken or they are lost.

Still, Apple Computer Inc. of Cupertino, Calif., which hit hard times in recent years, suspended its sabbatical program a year ago. The leave allowed six weeks of paid time off every five years.

The company's fortunes have improved in the past few quarters and the sabbatical suspension may be reviewed, says Apple Canada Inc. spokesman Dennis Manning. In most cases, companies do not use replacement workers. The employee taking the sabbatical is responsible for farming out his or her work to colleagues.

"You've got four years to plan for this," Mr. Barr says. "If you can't plan four years out to make sure you're not replaced, then we have a problem."

Filling in for a colleague on sabbatical often offers junior employees a chance to rise to a challenge. "When you get more junior people who get a chance to do things that stretch them, they get a little less enamoured of their own jobs," says Ed Martin, vice-president of human resources at Alias/Wavefront.

That puts pressure on a company's career development staff to make sure those employees have more opportunity to advance, now that they've had a taste of greater responsibility.

Calculating the cost of sabbaticals may be hard, but the cost of not having them can be high. "We would lose more people," Mr. Barr says.

Even a switch to another company would be viewed as a break by some burned-out employees. "It's seen as: 'Let me out from under this pile of stuff and give me a new pile.'"

The advantage of the time off is that employees can break away from their routines. Ron Haber, who works in sales for Silicon Graphics

Canada, used the first couple of weeks of his sabbatical to polish his golf game before travelling to Europe and India to help his wife land the Canadian distribution rights for a cosmetic firm.

"SGI is a pretty intense environment," Mr. Haber says. "We are in high-tech, where there's constant change. Meeting your quarterly goals, doing that for four consecutive years, you require that [extended] break from your normal pace."

In fact, he found that returning to his normal pace took some time.

"When you get back from eight weeks of vacation, you're basically in slow motion, compared with the way your peers are working."

This is actually a great thing, he says, because colleagues see the rejuvenative effect of the sabbatical.

That was also the experience of Wendy Crawford, national market manager for design and education at Apple Computer Canada.

Before Apple suspended its sabbatical program, she spent six weeks travelling around the world. "It had a great effect on my attitude toward work and my productivity."

Ms. Miraglia fully expects to return to Alias/Wavefront invigorated and enthusiastic.

Besides producing *Life on a Diet*, she'll use her sabbatical to start another play. But when her time is up, "I'll want to get back to my reality."

"It's like doing any kind of fantastic travel. Just when you're starting to have enough of it, that's the time to go back to work."

*By Geoffrey Rowan in The Globe and Mail*

### **3824 FLEXIBLE HOURS**

*This idea is still new to us. So was it elsewhere. Their fears were proved baseless. When we really think of it, we need flexible hours system in our country more than in other countries.*

When Royal Bank of Canada allowed its staff to job share or to work flexible hours in 1990, managers were wary of the idea.

Now, nearly two thirds of them say they would highly recommend flexible work arrangements. Employees like the plans so much, 36 per cent of those that use them say they would leave the company if they were no longer available.

Gay Mitchell, the bank's executive vice-president of human resources, says this finding didn't bother her. "I understood - they were saying we need these choices. Otherwise, the struggle to juggle is too much."

Royal Bank provides a total of five different alternate work patterns, including flexible hours, working at home or modifying workweeks to take extra time off. The bank estimates about 30 per cent of its 39,000 staff now use the plans, including 1,100 who share jobs.

A survey of 1,700 staffers shows that 63 percent of managers would highly recommend flexible work arrangements for their employees, an increase from 34 per cent in a similar survey from 1994. Only 1 per cent would not recommend them.

More than a third of managers said they felt employees using flexible arrangements were more efficient. In 1994, only a quarter thought so.

Many managers now have experience with several employees working flexible arrangements, and they are more confident about the program, says Norma Tombari, Royal Bank's manager for work force solutions.

The bank has also poured extra resources into the programs, including an electronic system to help staff find job-sharing partners or for managers to exchange tips on how to handle flexible work, she says.

There is even a self-assessment form to help people decide if their work habits are similar enough to allow them to successfully share jobs. It covers issues such as whether an employee tends to carry information in his head or prefers to write it down - an obvious source of conflict between job-sharers.

Ms. Mitchell herself used a flexible work pattern when her younger son, Ryan, was born five years ago. She and her husband, who is also with the bank, each worked from home for two or three months. She says several female colleagues asked whether it was the only way

to advance to senior levels. But that wasn't the case, she says. "It was personal choice."

The bank was supportive to the extent of adding extra home security because of the nature of her work.

For employees, experience with flexible work appears to have overcome fears that it would mean fewer promotions. The survey shows that 78 per cent of the program's users felt their opportunities for advancement were the same or better as when they worked traditional weeks.

Seventy per cent of users reported lower stress levels, including Kim Beitel, who handles loans and mortgages in a downtown Regina branch. She alternates one week on, one week off. On Wednesday, she was able too to a track meet with two of her children.

Ms. Beitel and her partner at work leave detailed notes for each other on loan applications, she explains. The setup is working well despite the fact they didn't know one another before starting the flexible work program six months ago.

Wendy Duross, a human resources manager for 21 Ottawa-area Royal Bank branches, takes every second Friday off and usually runs errands on those days so that her family can enjoy cycling or roller blading on Saturdays.

She makes it clear that her staff is welcome to phone her with problems on her day off, but they have only done so three or four times in the past year. "I'm more likely to phone in about something I forgot."

Her work includes recruiting for the bank on college campuses and she says young graduates often ask about flexible work possibilities to allow them to do things such as return to school.

Mrs. Duross was recently able to see things from the client side when she wanted car financing in a hurry and found that her own account managers shared their jobs. One of them processed her application, and she picked it up from the other the next day without any problems, she reports.

She says it's a harder sell to convince managers that employees should be able to use flexible work for purposes other than child care. Her own view is that the bank should try

to accommodate staff for whatever reason they choose.

In Calgary, account manager Terry Docherty splits her time between the bank, her home office and her visits to client businesses. Customers seem happy about the process, she says, because they often feel more at ease meeting bankers on their home turf.

She likes the time at home to do the complex paperwork associated with her job. "I feel I can concentrate better at home, but I don't think [it] is for everyone. Some people need the social aspect of work."

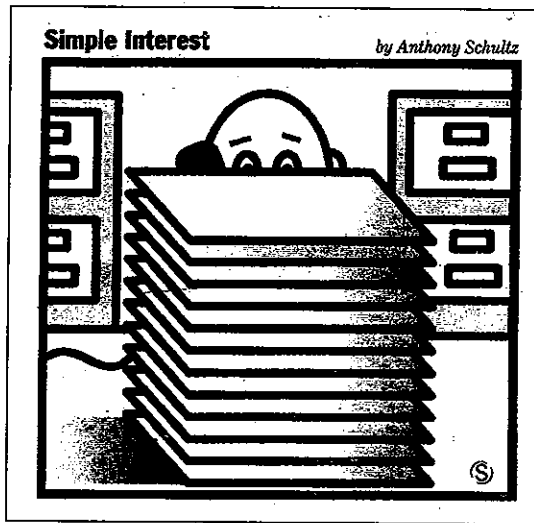
Ms. Docherty schedules client visits outside rush hour to avoid traffic and she can now pick up her children from the nanny in five or 10 minutes instead of 45.

Over all, 81 per cent of flexible work users at Royal Bank said they had become more effective in balancing work and their outside lives. And 94 per cent said they were very satisfied with their work arrangements.

*By Margot Gibb-Clark In Globe and Mail*

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### 3825 LAUGHING MATTER?



*As a matter of fact, Jones, I'm looking over your paperwork reduction proposal right now*

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