



The 21st Century Workplace

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To succeed in the next century, companies will need to develop value-driven leaders, making effective use of people and technology. Whether it is in a professional, government or manufacturing environment, companies will only be as good as their leadership. These new leaders must be goal-oriented and capable of conceptualizing and developing their organizations in pursuit of reaching goals. Companies will become more flat in their corporate structures. The expansion of telecommuting and the virtual office will continue to increase. With telephones and computers, the virtual office allows flexibility in balancing one's personal life and professional life, providing an attractive alternative for employees. From a company's standpoint, telecommuting reduces the need to have all employees under one roof, thus reducing the cost of office space.

There will be a changing face of the workforce in ethnicity, race, age and gender. As baby-boomers age, life expectancies increase, and birth rates continue to fall, the workforce will see older workers continuing to work past age 70. These talented workers will continue to work either full or part-time. Employers will find that the older workers are reliable and trustworthy. The need for foreign workers not only in the high-tech fields but also in the general labor pools will continue to increase. The immigration laws will have to be changed in order for the U.S. to compete and be a leader in the global marketplace. These additional workers will continue to come from Asia, Latin America and India. As more women continue to work and work longer hours, employers must find ways for them to better balance the demand of family and home. The workplace and the workforce are changing at lightning speed, and the workforce will be reflective of a world community.

Companies will increase the use of temporary agencies, using temporary workers and contract workers for special projects. This use of the temporary and contract workers eliminates the need of having full-time employees during seasonally slow times or increasing the employee count when production dictates a temporary increase in business. The use of this workforce also eliminates the cost of paying benefits. Companies will join Professional Employer Organizations (PEO) at an increasing rate. This means that in a member company, all employees from the Chairman of the Board to the lowest paid employee share co-employment with the PEO. The companies that join a PEO, although operating their business as usual, become part of a much larger pool of companies. Because of the numbers of participants, members receive reduced rates in the cost of benefits for their employees. The positives of this arrangement are not only the reduced costs of benefits, but also the reduced cost of salaries for personnel that administrate the benefits and payroll, as well as some human resources functions. PEOs will continue to be most attractive to small to medium sized companies.

Organizations and employees will have to be alert and open to changing trends and cutting edge technology. Continuous education, technology and resourcefulness will be key in the future success of not only new and emerging companies, but for today's established companies as well.