

commitment to act on strategic imperatives; 3) develop, share and exchange effective practices; 4) track change and refine strategy over time.

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VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS DON'T HAVE TO COST MONEY

Kingsville Convention and Visitors Bureau in Texas has a group of 23 volunteers who staff its center 7 days a week. All are seniors who are there because they want to be, reports Charla Doughty, the center's events/volunteer coordinator.

Hers is one of many responses received to the "hot topic" "Money Is No Object" proposed by Energize, a Philadelphia-based training, publishing and consulting firm specializing in volunteerism and headed by Susan Ellis. Some other programs and advice:

- Edmonton: Helen Rusich of the Terra Ass'n began a labor support program for pregnant women. She recruited from Doula Ass'n, nursing students, midwifery ass'n, etc. Staff provides the training and orientation.
- Boston: Maureen Crawford Hentz, head of volunteer programs at New England Aquarium, uses volunteers judiciously by holding applicants to program requirements. The Aquarium shuns money when "fulfillment" requirements are unreasonable (e.g., I'll give you \$5000 if you let me fish in your giant ocean exhibit).
- Saskatchewan: Shelley Thoen-Chaykoski manages a leisure services dep't in a small rural community. When no grants were available, she learned that volunteer groups were much more creative and willing to work together toward a common goal.

BUSINESS IS CONCERNED ABOUT THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

Almost 2/3rds of 500 IT and business professionals say their organizations are concerned about the digital divide – 16% extremely concerned and 48% somewhat concerned. The divide refers to the gap in ownership and access to the Internet between the affluent and the poor, including those in rural areas. Some cities and companies have taken steps to breach the gap:

- New York City's "City Access" project has placed Public Internet kiosks throughout its five boroughs. These have been used by more than 2.7 million people. Atlanta's Community Technology Initiative has created technology centers that provide residents access to computers and the Web.
- A few companies have set their sights overseas. Microsoft contributed more than \$8 million in cash and \$13 million in software to fund 95 community-based projects in developing countries. And Hewlett-Packard dedicated \$1 billion in products and services to at least 1,000 villages.

Besides providing access, cities and organizations must also pay attention to the **effective and efficient use of information**, says Sylvia Charp, editor-in-chief of *T.h.e. Journal*, an educational publication on technological horizons in education.

JOLTING THE HATE OUT OF KIDS; COUNTY-BASED PROGRAMS INTERVENE EARLY TO ROOT OUT BIASES, PREVENT VIOLENCE

According to psychologists, most low-level hate crimes such as vandalism are not committed by neo-Nazi skinheads or crazed members of extremist groups. Rather, most such crimes are perpetrated by otherwise law-abiding teens who are somehow blinded (say, by booze) to the immoral nature of their behavior. UCLA psychologist Edward Dunbar notes that of 1,459 hate crimes recently committed within a year's time in the Los Angeles area, fewer than 5% of the offenders were members of organized hate groups.

For juvenile offenders, the main drivers tend to be: a) **personal prejudice** prompted by a feeling that their biases are sanctioned by society. This can be exemplified in a situation in which a group of male teens feel it's "safe" to harass a gay person; or b) **a situation** (e.g., alcohol, peer encouragement, etc.) that colors an individual's judgment. That teens are so impressionable is actually hopeful news, say researchers, because it points to their receptivity to programs designed to make them face their biases, redirect their behavior.

MODEL PROGRAMS

Several programs throughout the U.S., including the LA-based JOLT (Juvenile Offenders Learn Tolerance), Maryland's STOP (Stopping Terroristic Outbreaks of Prejudice), and the Anti-Defamation League's juvenile diversion projects assist the courts by taking on juveniles who have committed low-level hate crimes. The programs target the teens with various intervention techniques and strive to make this group realize the effects of their behavior on themselves, their families, their victims and society as a whole. The overall goal is, of course, behavioral change.

- **Partnership with parents** is an integral part of all the programs. Parents are a) surveyed along with their children to reveal biases; b) encouraged to go thru the educational process with the kids; c) asked to sign a contract with their child.
- **DA offices work with school personnel** to encourage and plan a curriculum of social issues and age-appropriate lesson plans concerning civil rights, prejudice and discrimination.

Programs vary according to components. A sampling:

1. **Operation Growhair** – the name spoofs skinheads – is a California-based program that features "scared straight" jailhouse visits.
2. **Holocaust Memorial Resource & Education Center** (Fla) has kids watch films such as "Schindler's List," attend exhibits to learn about violence and persecution during WWII, etc.
3. **Therapeutic format**. Pathways also opts for "therapeutic" rather than "educational" approach, interviewing participants about psychological needs met by acting out, helping them develop coping skills, etc.



- 4. **Restorative justice.** A Florida-based program looks for creative ways youths can express regret. For example, a teen involved in racial bullying at school created a memorial to honor the victims of racism in American history and donated it to the public library. Another program has kids write letters of apology to victims.
- 5. **Visits from minorities** explaining their culture. For example, a Muslim could tell juveniles about his or her various religious holidays and how they're observed.
- 6. **Other Educational Tools.** JOLT requires four 2-hour sessions focusing on helping youths realize that certain behaviors must cease or will result in further justice system involvement. Juveniles learn the concepts of stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, scapegoating, racism and how to recognize these concepts within themselves, others and society, with focus on critical thinking about media images. Sessions also track progression of attitudes and behaviors that lead to hate violence.

Post Program Behavior Assessed. Some programs track kids afterward to make sure that, along with staying out of trouble, they keep up school attendance & grades.

WANT YOUR EMPLOYEES TO LOVE YOU? BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH HEALTHCARE VENDORS AND FIGHT FOR GOOD BENEFITS

Healthcare costs are rising, and so are the costs of healthcare plans. U.S. workers expect their employers to do something to control these escalating prices, but find their bosses aren't up to the job. A recent survey from Watson Wyatt (Bethesda) shows only 1 in 10 employers achieve "excellent employee satisfaction" ratings for controlling the cost outcomes of their healthcare plans.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH VENDORS MATTER

Employers can improve employee satisfaction with health plans and

decrease costs of their medical benefit programs if they can effectively manage healthcare vendors. "The fact that so few employers are achieving excellent results means there's a lot of room for employers to adjust their vendor mgmt practices," says study author Steve Richter. "It takes considerable effort for the employer to build an effective partnership with the health plan vendor. But for those who make the investment, the payoffs are considerable in terms of both employee satisfaction and plan costs."

The study finds that the best predictor of excellent outcomes in both employee satisfaction and cost control is the **employer's ability to obtain a sustained commitment** and effort from vendors. Nearly 3/4ths of employers with excellent outcome reported a "sustained vendor effort." Among the 175 large employers surveyed, some fared better than others in getting what their employees want from healthcare vendors. Among "best practices" highlighted by the survey, management reveal areas where sustained effort is implemented:

Practice	Percent where sustained effort is present
Clearly defined/desired outcomes	78%
Confirm expectations with performance guarantees	72%
Reinforce expectations with performance monitoring	59%
Reinforce expectations with regular meeting	77%

COST OUTCOMES ALSO BETTER WITH SOUND VENDOR RELATIONS

Organizations should stay on top of vendor performance. Those employers who achieved excellent cost outcomes were

more likely to have formal performance monitoring systems in place. They also tend to secure multi-year commitments and conduct frequent face-to-face meetings with vendors. Also:

1. Secure multi-year commitment for service improvement
2. Perform claims, administer audits
3. Solicit employee feedback in a formalized (not formal) way

Of Related Interest...

EMPLOYEE VALUES HAVE SHIFTED; LEARN THEM AND WIN OVER YOUR WORKFORCE

If reputation translates into bottom line results, employees are huge stakeholders. Wirthlin Worldwide highlights the impact of shifting employee values and outlines what organizations can do to enhance commitment from this key public.

Wirthlin surveyed 1,012 adult American workers, found areas where values have changed and the leverage points provided by those changes:

What Makes Them Tick?

- Job satisfaction means pay and benefits to provide better **balance of work and family life.**
- **Quality has become internalized,** driven by having the tools to the job – education, good communication within the organization, qualified managers. These lead to improved self esteem, and ultimately, stronger organizational performance.
- Emphasis has shifted from jobs themselves to **gaining knowledge and involvement,** as jobs are no longer seen as for life.

Communication, Leadership and Alignment

- **Aligning employees with the business plan** gets bottom line results. This requires effective internal communication combined with effective leadership performance.
- 2/3rds of those surveyed say they understand the company's business plan and their role in achieving it, yet **fewer than half believe their manager translates the plan.**

Commitment Gap Widening

- 2/3rds feel very committed to employers, with an additional 29% say they feel moderately committed – a significant change from '98 when only 56% felt very committed.
- **Far fewer (38%)** feel commitment is returned by their employer. No change from '98, but the gap has widened.
- **Managers who listen** and respond to employee feedback drive satisfaction with communication.
- **Other drivers:** a) managers and employees working toward the same objectives; b) providing employees with the info they need to contribute fully; c) recognizing employees for their accomplishments; d) offering opportunities for involvement; e) honesty from management.

Wirthlin says employers should provide a thorough understanding of the workplace, both rationally & emotionally, providing a template upon which all strategies can be based. Once benchmark research has been completed, 1) provide employees with visible response to the data; 2) build ownership and