

Productivity is battle cry of new, global world

TORONTO - Do managers earn their keep? Are chief executives really worthy what they are paid?

These are crucial questions, given the pressures of global competition. Yet all we hear about is how workers must pull up their socks and start working harder. Productivity - output per worker - is the battle cry of the new, global world.

Productivity encompasses much more than how quickly people work on the plant floor. It depends on how modern the equipment is. And it depends on the good judgement and restraint of management, from the office supervisor to the president and the chairman of the board.

Lately, Finance Minister Michael Wilson has taken to lecturing workers about the need for restraint. His latest target is the Canadian Auto Workers union. His preaching must be annoying to the people who work for General Motors, Ford and Chrysler.

It was executives, not workers, who took their eye off the ball during the 1970s and enabled foreign carmakers to clean up. Management has had a decade to mend its ways. By the looks of it, it has failed miserably. Customers prefer Japanese cars.

CUT JOBS

The automakers' solution is to cut costs and jobs. The Big Three are beginning to move production to Mexico, where labor costs are cheaper. Maybe they should try

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giving the customer what he wants instead.

The auto industry is not the only one that has been poorly managed over the years. Almost invariably, the failure of a company to compete - or even stay alive in many cases - is a failure of management. It is not the fault of the hundreds of thousands of people who depend on corporate executives for their living.

True, some of those who failed have been inspired leaders for whom employees were willing to go the extra mile. They tried and failed. People can understand that. Included in this group is Max Ward, the legendary founder of Wardair.

On the other side are some equally legendary names. But there are also less-known ones. As business failures pile up and profits tumble, managers of companies that have issued shares to the public will have to stand up and account for

themselves. Corporate North America is no longer a cozy club offering a lifetime membership for those who have achieved executive status. Too often, these decision-makers do not merit their position.

GOVERNMENT WORSE

Government is even more guilty - and, strangely, less accountable. In Ontario, for example, civil service salaries have soared. For months now, want ads in the local newspaper have been swelled with ads for government jobs. Why is government expanding when the provincial economy is suffering the worse slowdown since 1982?

No wonder Mr. Wilson's words fall on deaf ears. Perhaps it is time he cut back federal government transfer payments to the provinces.

The bottom line, as we business writers like to say, is that people are fed up. We are being skewered as taxpayers with the new goods and services tax. We are being skewered as workers by not being allowed to catch up with past inflation. We have no control over the destiny of the companies we work for. If we try to go into business for ourselves, we are smacked with high borrowing costs.

Meanwhile, bank chairmen write off their expensive business suits as uniforms. High-flying executives draw paycheques in the hundreds of thousands, with perks that effectively double the take. And Canada slides further down the productivity scale.

Architects can provide help

This article is provided by local Realtors and the Ontario Real Estate Association (OREA) for the benefit of consumers in the real estate market.

Has your home kept pace with your changing tastes and needs? Is it time for a major overhaul? If you want to turn your house into the dream home you've always longed for, you may want to consult an architect. Architects provide help with planning and designing and can devise a realistic, workable plan to suit both your needs and your budget. They can also provide ongoing consultation throughout the construction phase - to ensure that your "dream" doesn't turn into a nightmare.

When searching for a registered architect to handle your project, check with any family members, friends or neighbors who have had architectural work done. If they are pleased with the results, get the names of the architects they consulted.

You can also find architects listed in the phone book. You'll want to find one who specializes in home design and renovations - not an industrial or commercial architect.

If possible, you may want to talk to a few architects before choosing one for your particular project. Ask to see pictures of projects they've handled and talk to their former clients. You should also have a good rapport with the person you select, so you can be sure that your needs and wishes are fully understood.

Types of architectural services can vary, depending on the work to be done. If your project is relatively simple, you may only want to meet

with an architect once or twice, to help further develop your ideas and plans, or discuss viable options.

But if the project is complex and lengthy, you'll probably want an architect to handle the entire undertaking, providing valuable input and supervision until completion.

An architect can tell you if your plans are realistically suited to your budget. You may end up having to sacrifice some aspects of your plans, but your architect can come up with a design which will be able to accommodate future changes.

If you find that the addition of new rooms or a second storey is too costly for your budget, an architect can often show you how to make better use of existing space within your home.

CONVEY IDEAS AND NEEDS

When you meet with your architect, make sure you convey your ideas and needs clearly. It's also helpful to show him or her newspaper or magazine clippings of designs or ideas that you'd like to incorporate into your remodelling project.

If you're handy with a sketch pad and pencil, you can develop some rough drawings which can be helpful as well.

After discussing the project with you in detail, the architect will develop a series of his or her own drawings. These drawings will illustrate what your home will look like once the proposed renovations have been made.

Once the preliminary drawings are complete, you can discuss the plans further, outlining any concerns you may have about the proposal. While they are bound to be

many small changes and adjustments made throughout the planning and construction process (due to availability of materials, and so on), it is much easier to incorporate any major alterations at the drawing-board stage.

PAYMENT

Fees are usually arranged on a per-hour basis, or as a percentage of the construction costs of the project. If the fees is based on a percentage of the cost, then supervision of the construction phase is generally included.

While it is difficult to come up with an exact price for the work required, an architect should be able to give you a fairly good predetermination of how much his or her services will cost.

The fee should include supervisory visits to the project, costs of any additional consultants, and so on.

Before any work gets under way, both you and the architect should sign a contract. Most architectural firms have standard client-architect agreement forms available. Make sure you are both clear on the terms of the contract.

Input from a good architect should result in work that will enhance the value and appearance of your home for many years to come.

A new spirit of giving

IMAGINE

A national program in mortgage giving and counselling.

Survey Completed Wednesday, Sept. 12, 1990	MORTGAGE RATES ANNUAL INTEREST					
	SIX MONTH	ONE YEAR	TWO YEAR	THREE YEAR	FOUR YEAR	FIVE YEAR
TRUST COMPANIES						
Canada Trust	N/A	13.75	13.75	13.50	13.50	13.50
Municipal Trust	N/A	13.75	13.75	14.00	14.25	14.25
NRS/Royal Trust	13.50	13.50	13.50	13.50	13.50	13.50
CHARTERED BANKS						
Bank of Commerce	N/A	13.50	13.50	13.50	13.50	13.50
Bank of Montreal	13.50	13.50	13.50	13.50	13.50	13.40
Bank of Nova Scotia	N/A	13.50	13.50	13.50	13.50	13.50
Royal Bank	13.50	13.50	13.50	13.50	13.50	13.50
Toronto Dominion	13.50	13.50	13.50	13.50	13.50	13.50
This survey was prepared to help the Herald Homestyle readers track weekly Bank and Trust Company rates.						

Homeowners not thrilled by Autumn leaves

The glorious colours of the Autumn leaves are enjoyed by all. Homeowners, however, are not always so enthusiastic about leaves once they have fallen and cover all parts of the garden, driveway and paths. What to do?

While fallen leaves may provide a good mulch on flower beds, it is important to remove them from lawn areas where they encourage the presence of mice and other rodents which can do extensive damage to turf. A mat of wet leaves can also aid the growth of grass-killing fungi.

If the property is large, or even not so large, but dominated by one of several large shade trees, there will be great numbers of leaves. For many homeowners, the gathering of the leaves, while it may seem a chore, is not nearly as large a concern as the actual disposal of them. Many municipalities, where landfill site availability is becoming a problem, are no longer picking up leaves, grass clippings, and other garden trash as part of the normal weekly service.

A practical alternative is for homeowners to compost their own leaves in a remote or out-of-the-way corner of their property. While there are several commercial composting units available, none of these is really suitable for composting the great quantities of leaves with which most homeowners must deal each Autumn. The answer is a special composting area for leaves. Choose a corner of the garden out of sight, possibly heavily shaded. The composting can be done in trenches dug into the soil, but the best method is to construct a simple bin.

One method that is simple is to use three standard wood pallets used for shipping many goods, and often available for the taking from industrial parks in cities. Nail the three pallets together to form a "U" shape, set on the ground with one open side. For fastest composting,

before putting the leaves in the bin, pile them in thick layers on the driveway, and run the rotary lawn mower (set at its lowest setting) over them several times in all directions. There are also small shredders available made especially for shredding leaves.

Once the leaves have been chopped up with the rotary mower, it's time to add them in layers to the compost bin. Make each layer about 15-20 cm (6-8"). On top of each layer place a 3 cm (1") layer of garden soil, and some animal manure, or handful of high nitrogen (not slow release) fertilizer. Nitrogen is the first number in the formula on fertilizer bags, and is the ingredient on which the bacteria and other decomposition organisms feed.

Continue to pile the leaves to at least a height of one metre or even higher, being sure to alternate with the soil and manure or nitrogen fertilizer. The pile will work best if it is moist; usually the Autumn rains provide sufficient. If it becomes dry, a hose soaking is in order. If the pile is not frozen a month after the leaves have been stacked, it should be turned in order to get air to the centre. The turning can be a chore, so an alternative is to install plastic piping that is drilled with holes its entire length up through the centre of the pile.

Next spring, examine your pile, and turn it again. Depending on: 1) the type of leaves (oak is the slowest to compost), 2) the amount of reduction by shredder or lawn mower, and 3) the efficiency of the pile, particularly the air from turning; your leaves may be suitable for use as garden compost as soon as the following Autumn, or it may take one more year. Regardless of how long, you'll have one of Nature's finest soil conditioners and organic matter to add to your garden at literally no cost.