

**IN RESPONSE TO THE SEPTEMBER, 2003 QUARTERLY REPORT
HR VS. CEO FINDINGS**

Dear Dr. Welbourne:

I have just finished reading the September 2003 Leadership Pulse Quarterly Report and I thought I would write to you regarding your observations relating to the difference between the HR executives who responded to your surveys and other executives, particularly CEOs. Your observations regarding the nature of HR work, and the effect on our optimism, certainly rings true to my ears. HR goes to the termination meetings, not the promotion parties. But I think it goes beyond that.

The HR function is trained to be pragmatic. We do not over commit because we typically do not have the luxury of failing to meet our commitments. We cannot fail to hire the resources that the organization needs, we cannot afford to fail to deliver the training program that we promised. But GMs and other managers often fail to deliver sales results or meet manufacturing budgets with little consequence. Often times "Results Equal No Results Plus A Good Excuse". In my experience that is not acceptable in HR because too much is riding on having the resources and programs in place, we are just too visible. So HR would rather under promise and over deliver.

I have been involved in leading the strategic planning initiatives of my company for three years, so I am not one of those HR executives who is looking for a seat at the table, I have one. But I will admit that from my seat at the table I am more pessimistic regarding the ability of my leadership team to deliver on the initiatives that support the strategy than they tend to be. My view comes from a view of past performance against objectives and their view comes from a future view of what is planned to happen. Often past performance does not support the plans for the future. This is a good thing because you do not want the future to be just the "past projected forward", but HR people always look for proof.

However your comment about the gap between the outlook of the CEO and HR is interesting. Generally I would look at that gap as positive, someone has to be the "realist". But no one wants a "realist" at the planning party to put a pin in the balloons, so a balance needs to be struck. I believe that it is the role of HR to strike that balance, Finance is always looking back to analyze results, IT is busy trying to automate today's reality, HR needs to focus on the strategy of the future and deliver the resources, in both people and talent, that will be needed to successfully implement those strategies. It is the job of HR to understand the business' that they support so well that they are able to identify future business problems and bring HR solutions to those problems. So HR is always looking for, or fixing, problems. Maybe we wear that on our sleeves too much. Your survey results will cause me to reconsider how I approach my observations of our success in implementing our business initiatives in the future.

I enjoyed reading the report and I will continue to participate. Thank you for this valuable work.

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