



# Labour



## Mental Health in Canadian Workplaces: Investigating Employer's Best Practices

Great Place to Work<sup>®</sup> Institute Canada

## Great Place to Work® Institute Canada Final Report

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## Executive Summary

Research shows that the cost of mental health issues in the workplace can be significant; they exert a human toll on individuals, impede productivity, and generate substantial societal costs. The data also show that work-related stress is of particular concern.

This report examines how some Canadian employers have been successful in fostering psychosocial wellness in their workplace through a limited number of case studies centered on management processes.

These processes are further assessed for alignment with Great Britain's Management Standards program, which is considered internationally to be an exemplary approach to improving the psychosocial wellbeing of workers. Although other countries have addressed the issue, no other government-led strategy has resulted in such a **practical** solution.

A total of seven Canadian organizations are featured here as case studies. Every attempt was made to ensure that participants reasonably reflected the Canadian employer population in terms of industry sectors, firm size and geographical distribution. All of the participating organizations are recent recipients of at least one, but in many cases several, highly recognized award(s) based on their achievements in fostering an environment that is conducive to psychosocial wellness.

By and large, the leading Canadian employers selected for inclusion in this study are using management processes that align well with the British Management Standards. Specific practice examples, each linked to one of the six Management Standards, are detailed at length in this report.

To ensure that a sufficient range of management practices were captured in this report, each of the participating organizations was also assessed using the Great Place to Work® Model®. In doing so, a number of additional management processes were uncovered. These are also detailed at length in the body of the report.

In a series of telephone interviews, senior representatives from each participating organization were asked about their motivation for implementing the types of processes, policies, and practices previously described in this report. The motivating factors were generally twofold. First, it's the **right** thing to do. Second, good people practices make good business sense.

Without exception, each of the best workplaces participating in this study indicated, either through hard data or anecdotal evidence, that their workplace culture (which includes good psychosocial management practices) does, in fact, contribute to the organization's success.

Specifically, Best Workplaces participating in this study noted that a strong workplace culture has resulted in three distinct benefits. The first is an improved sense of wellness and overall satisfaction among employees. The second is improved service quality and subsequent client satisfaction. The third is a strengthened reputation in the community and increased brand awareness.

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The ongoing commitment of resources to these practices and processes is the clearest evidence that management at best workplaces feel they are effective. The ability, however, of most organizations to directly measure the impact of these programs and practices on work-related stress is limited.

What these organizations are able to measure is participation rates in programs designed to reduce work-related stress. When these figures are coupled with more general indicators of psychosocial well-being (for example, survey results), the organization may be able to draw some conclusions about the effectiveness of its programs and processes. The two most commonly used measurements of psychosocial health among case study organizations are EAP usage and employee surveys.

Although the examples of management practices found here may have been designed to target specific aspects of health and well-being, case study participants repeatedly referenced the wide range of interrelated benefits that result from a fundamental commitment to caring for people.

Research from the Great Place to Work<sup>®</sup> Institute indicates that the best workplaces tend to have particularly effective policies and practices in nine key areas of management practice. By surveying employees about their experience of work, we assessed the extent to which these management processes and practices have been effective. For example, 86 percent of employees in case study organizations responded positively<sup>1</sup> to the statement: *taking everything into account, I would say this is a great place to work.*

This report concludes that while the provinces and territories are primarily responsible for the health and well-being of workers, the federal government is uniquely positioned to provide a leadership role in the development of a national approach to the mental health and well-being of workers. The newly created Mental Health Commission will be an important partner in this endeavor given its mandate to develop Canada's mental health strategy.

By carefully reviewing the expert recommendations for a modified Management Standards program, Canada has the opportunity to develop a more polished version of this already very successful program. Specifically, this will require continued testing of the survey tool and further reflection on options for the development of organizational capacity and ways to support employers as they transition from assessment to action.

Of critical importance will be the development of an incentive structure that motivates organizations to participate in this type of program. Even when there is no financial cost involved, participation still requires a substantial commitment from organizations and has costs in terms of employee time.

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<sup>1</sup> This is the percentage of employees that answered "often true" or "almost always true."

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Nonetheless, the Management Standards do show good promise as a practical solution for reducing workplace stress. Further, a growing body of evidence suggests that this type of approach might also have a broader relevance to the management of other workplace health problems. Although addressing these issues will be challenging, it also presents an opportunity for organizations to demonstrate their care and commitment to employees; the rewards for which are significant and have the potential to create positive repercussions for individuals, for organizations, and for society.

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# Mental Health in Canadian Workplaces: Investigating Employer's Best Practices

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## Project Context

A growing body of evidence shows that a number of workplace mental health / wellness issues (which include job stress, work-life conflict, harassment, and violence) exert a human toll, lead to significant social costs and impede productivity, in Canada and abroad. The data also show that work-related stress is of particular concern.

This report will examine how some Canadian employers have been successful in fostering psychosocial wellness in their workplace through a limited number of case studies centred on management processes.

These processes will be further assessed for alignment with Great Britain's Management Standards program, which is considered internationally to be an exemplary approach to improving the psychosocial well-being of workers.

Insights obtained from this project may be leveraged to develop new policies to foster workplace practices conducive to psychosocial well-being.

## Background (Great Britain)

In Great Britain, unlike Canada, workplace health and safety is under the regulatory purview of a single overarching national body—the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

It is the responsibility of this body to ensure better workplace health and safety within the system as a whole. The mandate of HSE, however, extends well beyond the basic inspection, investigation and enforcement of an employer's legal duties. Taking a more holistic approach, key activities of the HSE also include research, the provision of information and advice, training promotion and establishing standards of practice.

It is this last activity, establishing standards of practice, which will be a key focus of this report. Of specific interest is a series of Management Standards designed to reduce the levels of work-related stress.

With no shortage of research on the societal costs of missed work due to injury and ill health, the HSE has declared that “maintaining the status quo is morally, legally and financially unacceptable.” (HSE, 2009a)

Recognizing that stress plays a key role in the ill health of British workers, the Health and Safety Commission (a predecessor of the HSE) undertook extensive consultations to determine how best to deal with the issue.



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The Commission concluded that a voluntary approach would be preferable to regulation and created a set of Management Standards that outline the characteristics, or culture, of organizations that successfully manage work-related stress.

However, while these standards remain voluntary, employers in the UK are still legally required to assess and control workplace health risks, including stress pursuant to the *Health and Safety at Work etc Act* (1974) and the *Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations* (1999).

The Management Standards demonstrate and promote best practices against which individual organizations can measure their own success in reducing six key workplace stressors. These are defined by HSE (HSE, 2009b) as follows:

- **Demands** – such as workload, work patterns and the work environment;
- **Control** – such as how much say the person has in the way they do their work;
- **Support** – such as the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organization, line management and colleagues;
- **Relationships** – such as promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour;
- **Role** – such as whether people understand their role within the organization and whether the organization ensures that they do not have conflicting roles; and
- **Change** – such as how organizational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organization.

Enrollment in the Management Standards program is voluntary. It is an iterative process of self-reflection and improvement that guides employers through a 5-step cycle of change from risk identification to analysis and assessment through to evaluation, action planning and monitoring.

The program is designed to be collaborative in nature, requiring the input and participation of stakeholders from all levels of the organization, thereby increasing the long-term sustainability of resultant change. Further, using a standards-based approach (for employers that wish to move beyond their basic legal requirements) rightly shifts the management of workplace risks to those who most directly create them.

Recent consultations with experts from across the UK and EU suggest that the Management Standards approach has been largely successful and shows good potential for transfer to other workplace health risks (HSE, 2009c). Before recommending its broader application, however, some modifications were cited as necessary, including capacity development within participating organizations, simplifying the implementation process, and adapting the primary measurement tool based on further validity and reliability testing (HSE, 2009c). Further, it was agreed that a business case should be developed to provide economic arguments supporting the rationale for managing stress (HSE, 2009c). This is of particular relevance in a recessionary economic environment when it becomes increasingly difficult to justify the allocation of scarce resources “based solely on the reduction of long-term harm to employees” (HSE, 2009c, pg. 8). Lastly,

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there was recognition that further development would be required in order to make the Management Standards more practical for small or micro-organizations.

Overall, the Management Standards have received wide praise for taking such an innovative and progressive approach to the reduction of workplace stress. Although there are a few countries that have addressed the issue, no other government-led strategy has resulted in such a practical solution.

## Background (Canada)

Whereas all programs related to the health and safety of British workers are neatly housed under one centralized body (HSE), the Canadian system is far more complex, involving an intricate patchwork of legislation enacted separately by each province and territory. This makes the coordination of activities all the more difficult as described in 2002 by the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology (Part VI):

*This government structure “does not easily lend itself to inter-ministerial responsibility for tackling complex problems. This difficulty is compounded several times over when various levels of governments, together with many non-governmental players, are taken into account, as they must be if population health strategies are to be truly effective.”*

Although there is a role for the federal government, it is the provincial and territorial governments that are primarily responsible for delivering services related to the health and well-being of Canadian workers.

## The role of provincial and territorial governments

In each province and territory, there are Employment Standards Acts and Human Rights legislation that, albeit more indirectly, do provide for the psychosocial well-being of employees. More pertinent, however, are: (a) Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) Acts, designed to keep workers safe on the job **before** an accident or illness occurs; and (b) Workers Compensation Acts, focused on benefit payments or compensation **after** a workplace injury has occurred<sup>2</sup>.

To administer this legislation, each province and territory has created its own Workers Compensation Board or Commission (WCBs) which operates at an arm's length from government and is both politically and financially independent. In most provinces, these boards or commissions are responsible for both the compensation and OH&S acts<sup>3</sup>.

The compensation system is based on a principle of no-fault insurance, in which both employees and employers relinquish their right to sue in exchange for compensation benefits. To fund this system, almost all employers are legally required to contribute to their provincial or territorial

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<sup>2</sup> Typically, these are written as separate acts, but there are exceptions. For example, in British Columbia provisions for occupational health and safety exist as a series of regulations written within the Workers' Compensation Act.

<sup>3</sup> There are a few governments, however, that have retained authority over parts (MB, NL, NS, ON) or all of (AB, SK) their OH&S obligations.

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WCB<sup>4</sup>. The rate of payment varies between employers and is assessed by determining a combination of the inherent risks associated with a specific job or industry and by the employer's individual history of workplace accidents or injury.

One issue that has proven to be consistently problematic within this system, however, is occupational stress. The problem is three-pronged. First, while the majority of workers compensation acts recognize stress associated with acute or traumatic incidents, this legislation often fails to acknowledge chronic stress as a legitimate and, therefore, compensable condition. Second, because the existing system focuses on rehabilitation and compensation rather than prevention, there is some reluctance to amend the legislation to include chronic stress for fear there would be a deluge of costly claims. Third, even in provinces that do recognize chronic stress, specific claims are still complicated by the fact that “it is more difficult to prove the genesis of a mental disorder than that of a physical illness” (Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, 2006, Section 8.5.1, pg. 192).

Despite the inherent complexities of this system, some provinces are taking innovative and proactive measures to support the psychosocial well-being of workers. This is, and will continue to be, of paramount importance since “disability claims attributable to mental illness have overtaken claims associated with cardiovascular disease as the fastest-growing category of disability costs in Canada” (Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, 2004, Section 6.4, pg. 113).

The province that has most directly addressed the psychosocial well-being of its workers is Quebec where, in 2004, an anti-bullying law was enacted under the Labour Standards Act. This law, the first of its kind in North America, helps to ensure employees are free from psychological harassment in the workplace.

## **The role of the federal government**

While the psychosocial wellness of workers generally falls under the purview of provincial and territorial governments, there remains an important role for the federal government. Given the uneven application of legislation across the country, the federal government is uniquely positioned to provide a leadership role in the development of a national approach to the mental health and well-being of workers.

This was one of the key findings to come out of the landmark 2006 Senate Committee report on Mental Health, Mental Illness, and Addiction. Led by Senator Micheal Kirby, the report, titled “Out of the Shadows at Last”, dealt with a number of mental health issues separately and specifically considered the workplace (Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology, 2006).

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<sup>4</sup> Notable exceptions include the following specific client groups which are covered by the federal government: First Nations and Inuit, federal offenders, Canadian Forces, veterans, RCMP, Immigrants and Refugees, and Federal Public Service Employees.

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The Kirby Report called for a “national” mental health strategy and stressed that this is different from a “federal” mental health strategy since the federal government would undertake a leadership role in this initiative but would not ultimately be responsible for either its development or enforcement.

Instead, the Senate Committee recommended the creation of a National Mental Health Commission that would operate at an arm’s length from government and guide the development of this strategy. Officially incorporated as a non-profit corporation in March 2007, the Commission is now in the process of developing Canada’s national mental health strategy. The first phase, completed in 2009, imagines what a transformed mental health system would look like. The second phase will examine how to achieve these broad goals. In doing so, a key priority will be the creation of solutions that are “practical, useful, and adaptable to the differing realities of each jurisdiction and sector” (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2009, pg. 10).

One solution worth consideration is the British Management Standards, which exemplify the transition from good theory to sound practice. As a voluntary program, this would side-step any issues associated with jurisdictional authority. Further, it would motivate a more proactive approach to occupational stress in a way that does not conflict with existing legislation.

In an effort to better understand whether or not it would be feasible to use the British HSE as a template and expand the Management Standards concept for use in Canada, this paper will begin to examine how some Canadian employers have been successful in fostering psychosocial wellness in their workplace through a limited number of case studies centred on management processes.

## **Methodology**

A total of 13 Canadian organizations were pre-selected as case studies for this project after successfully meeting a series of predetermined criteria; seven of these completed the steps required to participate. Every attempt was made to ensure that participants reasonably reflected the Canadian employer population in terms of industry sectors, firm size and geographical distribution. Further, all participating organizations are recent recipients of at least one, but in many cases several, highly recognized award(s) based on their achievements in fostering an environment that is conducive to psychosocial wellness.

There were three steps required of each participating organization. First, a telephone interview was conducted to gather information about the types of programs and practices that support the psychosocial well-being of employees.

Second, employees at each of the participating organizations were asked to complete a questionnaire that was used to assess the extent to which management practices within the case study organizations reflect the six core elements of the British Management Standards<sup>5</sup>. An

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<sup>5</sup> Organizations with more than 500 employees had the option of using a random sample or surveying everyone. The confidence level used was 84 percent with a 5 percent margin of error.

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expanded version of the Trust Index<sup>®</sup> survey, developed by the Great Place to Work<sup>®</sup> Institute, was selected for this purpose<sup>6</sup>.

Third, to complement information obtained through the Trust Index<sup>®</sup> survey, participating organizations were also asked to complete a Culture Audit<sup>®</sup> management questionnaire that details, more broadly, the culture of the organization from the employer's perspective. Together, these two questionnaires, both developed by the Great Place to Work<sup>®</sup> Institute, provide a complete picture of the workplace being assessed.

## Case Study Profiles

### 1-800-GOT-JUNK?

1-800-GOT-JUNK? is a full-service junk removal company whose friendly, uniformed drivers have set a new standard for professional junk hauling and great customer service. The company hauls away items that city garbage collectors do not typically accept, such as old furniture, renovation debris and backyard mess. Recent international expansion has earned 1-800-GOT-JUNK? the distinction of being "The World's Largest Junk Removal Service." Currently, 1-800-GOT-JUNK? has more than 250 Franchise Partners in three countries.

1-800-GOT-JUNK? was selected as a case study participant after earning a spot on the Great Place to Work<sup>®</sup> list of Best Workplaces in Canada in 2007 and 2009. Results from the survey used in the selection process for this list indicate that employees at 1-800-GOT-JUNK? feel respected by, and have particularly strong levels of respect for, management. In addition, 1-800-GOT-JUNK? has been recognized as one of the "Best Places to Work in BC" the past three years.

1-800-GOT-JUNK?						
Industry	Headquarters	Revenue (past year)	Full-time employees	Part-time employees	Most commonly held position	Average salary for this position
Industrial Services	Vancouver, BC	\$21.55 M	95	6	Sales Centre	\$38,000

### Delta Hotels and Resorts

Delta Hotels and Resorts is a leading Canadian hotel management company that operates and franchises a diversified portfolio, with 44 full-service, city centre and airport hotels and resorts under the Delta brand. With 12,499 guest rooms, Delta competes nationally in the first class, full-service upscale segment of the hotel industry.

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<sup>6</sup> McDonald's Canada was the exception in this group and is the only case study participant for which we will use existing internal survey results rather than the Trust Index<sup>®</sup> survey.

Delta Hotels and Resorts were selected as a case study for this project after earning two recent NQI Canada Awards for Excellence. This includes a Healthy Workplace Award (2004) and an Order of Excellence (2007). Furthermore, Delta Hotels and Resorts also earned recognition as one of the Report on Business “50 Best Employers” (2005–2009).

Delta Hotels and Resorts						
Industry	Headquarters	Revenue (past year)	Full-time employees	Part-time employees	Most commonly held position	Average salary for this position
Hospitality / Hotels	Toronto, ON	Information Unavailable	6,917	1,529	Information unavailable	Information unavailable

### Environics Communications

Environics Communications Inc. offers marketing-communications and public-relations services for public, private, and governmental organizations. Environics offers a wide range of professional services that focus on communications, marketing, research, and the development of stakeholder relations. After 15 years in business, the company has grown to become a mid-sized North American agency that prides itself in thoughtful analysis, creativity, and an unrelenting obsession with results.

Environics Communications Inc. was selected as a case study for this project after earning a position on the Great Place to Work<sup>®</sup> list of Best Workplaces in Canada in 2007 and earning second place overall in both 2008 and 2009. Results from the employee survey used in the selection process for this list indicate that employees at Environics Communications Inc. feel respected by, and have particularly strong levels of respect for, management. Moreover, Environics Communications has also been named to *Profit* magazine’s list of fastest growing companies in Canada two times and *Maclean’s* as one of Canada’s “100 Best Companies to Work For.”

Environics Communications Inc.						
Industry	Headquarters	Revenue (past year)	Full-time employees	Part-time employees	Most commonly held position	Average salary for this position
Advertising / Marketing	Toronto, ON	\$11 M	76	5	Senior Consultant	\$78,000

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## McDonald's Canada

In 1967, the first McDonald's restaurant outside of the United States opened in Richmond, British Columbia. Since then, McDonald's Canada has grown to include 1,400 locations, serving approximately 3 million Canadians every day. Nationally, the company sources quality ingredients and supplies from more than 100 suppliers in communities throughout Canada, purchases over \$700 million of goods and services in Canada each year, and employs approximately 77,000 Canadians (Corporate + Franchise restaurants).

McDonald's Canada was selected as a participant for this project after being recognized 97 times on one of the Great Place to Work<sup>®</sup> international lists of Best Workplaces. This year alone the company has been named on 23 of these lists. Results from employee surveys used in the selection process indicate that employees at McDonald's feel respected by, and have particularly strong levels of respect for, management.

McDonald's Canada						
Industry	Headquarters	Revenue (past year)	Full-time employees	Part-time employees	Most commonly held position	Average salary for this position
Hospitality / Food & Bev	Toronto, ON	\$1,178 M	5,030*	17,708*	Restaurant Crew	\$11.43 / hour

\* Corporately administered restaurants + HQ

## Protegra

In business since 1998, Protegra provides Business Performance Consulting and Information Technology Solutions to organizations in Canada, the United States, Europe and Asia. Protegra works with clients who have complex business problems and tough IT issues to deliver urgent solutions in industries such as financial services, agriculture, manufacturing and government. Protegra is 100 percent employee-owned and operates in a culture of respect, empowerment and collaboration.

Protegra was selected as a case study for this project after being recognized in the top three Best Workplaces in Canada 2009 by Great Place to Work<sup>®</sup> Institute Canada. Other accolades include a 2006 Best in Business Practices award from *Manitoba Business Magazine*, and recognition as one of Canada's fastest growing companies for the third consecutive year by *Profit* magazine.



Protegra						
Industry	Headquarters	Revenue (past year)	Full-time employees	Part-time employees	Most commonly held position	Average salary for this position
Professional Services	Winnipeg, MB	\$7 M	60	4	Software Developer	\$45,000

### Canada Safeway Limited

Safeway Inc. (Safeway) is one of the largest food and drug retailers in North America. At year-end 2008, Safeway operated 1,739 stores throughout North America. This includes 223 stores located in western Canada. Safeway prides itself in providing outstanding value to customers by offering a wide selection of high-quality products at attractive prices.

Canada Safeway Limited was selected as a case study for this project after earning a position on the Great Place to Work<sup>®</sup> list of Best Workplaces in Canada in 2009. Results from the employee survey used in the selection process for this list indicate that employees at Canada Safeway Limited feel respected by, and have particularly strong levels of respect for, management.

Canada Safeway Limited						
Industry	Headquarters	Revenue (past year)	Full-time employees	Part-time employees	Most commonly held position	Average salary for this position
Retail / Food	Calgary	\$6.014 M	12,490	20,861	Cashier	\$23,088

*\*\* These figures were drawn from the 2008 Canada Safeway Ltd. Culture Audit<sup>®</sup> submission.*

### Toronto East General Hospital

Toronto East General Hospital (TEGH) is a full-service community teaching hospital that has served the multicultural community of South East Toronto for 80 years. TEGH offers a full range of ambulatory (outpatient), inpatient and community-based programs and services to care for more than 20,000 inpatients and 220,000 outpatients each year. Over 2,600 employees, 400 physicians and midwives and 500 volunteers deliver this care. The Hospital has developed a unique and growing role in teaching and community-based research with a vision to be Ontario's leading community teaching hospital.



Toronto East General Hospital was selected as a case study for this project after earning multiple awards including a Canada Award for Excellence / Gold Level (the first Canadian acute care hospital to be recognized for outstanding performance in the area of quality and healthy workplace), a 2008 OHA Health Hospitals Innovator Award (which recognized TEGH for achieving the National Quality Institute's Organizational Quality and Healthy Workplace Level Four Award), and Cancer Care Ontario and Cancer Quality Council Quality Award, which recognized their Treat to Treat program (a model of care which has dramatically reduced wait times from suspicion of lung cancer to the beginning of treatment).

Toronto East General Hospital						
Industry	Headquarters	Revenue (past year)	Full-time employees	Part-time employees	Most commonly held position	Average salary for this position
Health Care / Hospital	Toronto, ON	\$239.4 M	1,545	793	Registered Nurse	\$55,577

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## Research Findings

### **Q1: Are the surveyed exemplary Canadian employers using management processes aligned with the British Management Standards?**

By and large, the leading Canadian employers selected for inclusion in this study are using management processes that align well with the British Management Standards.

Some, most notably the Toronto East General Hospital, have created a comprehensive series of policies and procedures that target mental health specifically. For example, they have dedicated a Strategic Plan solely to Mental Wellness.

The majority of these organizations, however, approach the issue more broadly as one of **psychosocial** health rather than mental health specifically. In this sense, psychosocial refers to both the psychological and the social environment. So as opposed to “mental health” which might only refer to the individual, psychosocial wellness uses a broader lens. It could include mental health, emotional health, social health (relationships at work), and basically anything that contributes to how a worker “feels” about their job.

When asked in a telephone interview what processes, policies, or practices are in place to support workplace mental health within the organization, the responses were typically narrow and limited to the organization’s partnership with an outside EAP provider. But when questioned more broadly about processes that support psychosocial well-being, these same organizations identified an impressive array of management practices that are very much aligned with the British Management Standards.

The degree to which these processes have been formalized as official policies and procedures in each organization varies greatly. In many cases, particularly in the small and medium-sized enterprises, these practices exist more informally, but with similar effect. That is to say, each of these organizations has successfully fostered an environment of psychosocial wellness.

By way of example, specific management practices from each of the seven Canadian employers featured in this study are provided below. In an effort to assess these processes for alignment with Great Britain’s Management Standards program, each practice has been linked to one of the six standards.

#### **1. Demands**

This includes issues such as workload, work patterns, and the work environment.

The Standard is that:

- employees indicate that they are able to cope with the demands of their jobs; and
- systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

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What should be happening / States to be achieved:

- the organization provides employees with adequate and achievable demands in relation to the agreed hours of work;
- people's skills and abilities are matched to the job demands;
- jobs are designed to be within the capabilities of employees; and
- employees' concerns about their work environment are addressed.

**Environics Communications: matches people's skills and abilities to the job demands**

To ensure that employees' talents are put to work in the most productive ways possible, work teams are reassigned for each project. Employee teams are carefully coordinated based on skills and abilities. Since employees typically balance three to four different client projects at any given time, it provides an excellent opportunity for colleagues to get to know one another. Operating in a team structure such as this protects employees from feelings of isolation because there is a built-in support group for every project. This facilitates the development of better solutions, because employee teams can work through problems together.

**Protegra: ensures that work loads are realistically achievable within agreed upon hours**

Protegra's culture insists on a healthy work-home balance. Management at Protegra keeps track of the number of hours worked per employee each week to measure their utilization rates (the amount of time people are putting in every week). If any employee is over the average recommended utilization ratio for a consistent period of time, the office manager and HR Director will work with the employee to find a better solution and ensure that no one person is being overworked. This balance is further supported by a flexible work week schedule which encourages employees to work from home as needed. Online server access is available on all Protegra laptops.

## **2. Control**

This includes how much say the person has in the way they do their work.

The Standard is that:

- employees indicate that they are able to have a say about the way they do their work;
- systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What should be happening / States to be achieved:

- where possible, employees have control over their pace of work;
- employees are encouraged to use their skills and initiative to do their work;
- where possible, employees are encouraged to develop new skills to help them undertake new and challenging pieces of work;
- the organization encourages employees to develop their skills;
- employees have a say over when breaks can be taken; and

- 
- employees are consulted over their work patterns.

### **1-800-GOT-JUNK?: employees have control over their paid personal leave**

At 1-800-GOT-JUNK?, the company's attendance tracker lumps vacation time, sick leave, and family time together. This gives employees more control over their personal paid leave. If someone uses less sick time, they get more vacation days. After the first year of work, all corporate staff gets five weeks. Furthermore, management has some discretionary authority to extend the personal paid leave on a case-by-case basis as needed.

### **Protegra: supports professional development**

To encourage skill development and professional growth among the team, Protegra has created a position of "Employee Relationship Facilitator." This is a full-time position, despite the fact that Protegra only has about 70 employees. Part of this person's role is to connect frequently with employees to understand their professional goals and help them design a career plan that will help them get there. The Employee Relationship Facilitator ensures that each staff member has a lot of "touch points" and opportunities to talk about their aspirations. This person also conducts research on prospective training opportunities, internally and externally, that will help employees grow within their occupation. Management at Protegra is proud of their retention rates and point to this position as one of the reasons that employees are so loyal.

## **3. Support**

This includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organization, line management and colleagues.

The Standard is that:

- employees indicate that they receive adequate information and support from their colleagues and superiors; and
- systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What should be happening / States to be achieved:

- the organization has policies and procedures to adequately support employees;
- systems are in place to enable and encourage managers to support their staff;
- systems are in place to enable and encourage employees to support their colleagues;
- employees know what support is available and how and when to access it;
- employees know how to access the required resources to do their job; and
- employees receive regular and constructive feedback.

### **Toronto East General Hospital: puts a strategic focus on mental health management**

Mental Health Management is one of three key priorities detailed in the TEGH Mental Wellness Strategic Plan. The goal is to ensure mental illness and disabilities are recognized, appropriately managed, and accommodated in the workplace. The significant action item

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associated with this priority is to educate the management leadership team. TEGH recognizes the need to accept the possibility that staff might experience different levels of mental illness and wants to ensure that their return to work is positive and welcoming. TEGH has partnered with their EAP provider to offer education sessions on an ongoing basis.

**McDonald's Canada: employees receive regular and constructive feedback**

By helping to provide an environment where employees are consistently coached / developed and encouraged to expand their skills and experience levels, the McDonald's Performance Development System links with their People Promise which states "We value you, your growth and your contributions." At the beginning of each year, employees are invited to document their performance goals and development objectives. To make sure the objectives are focused, employees are encouraged to develop goals that are S.M.A.R.T. (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound). Management uses this document to track goal achievement and assess performance at the end of each year.

**McDonald's Canada: offers a robust Employee Assistance Program**

McDonald's Canada offers an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to ensure that eligible employees, their spouses and dependent children who are experiencing personal problems have access to the best help available, at the earliest possible time, so that human and financial loss can be minimized or prevented. This confidential service is provided by an external group of professionals to ensure anonymity. They provide support over the telephone, in person, online, and through a variety of health and wellness resources. While not an exhaustive list, the following are examples of issues that could be covered under the Employee Assistance Program: the achievement of personal well-being, management of relationships and family, legal advice, financial advice, child and elder care support, counseling for workplace conflict, addictions counseling and nutritional counseling.

#### **4. Relationships**

This includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour.

The Standard is that:

- employees indicate that they are not subjected to unacceptable behaviours, e.g. bullying at work; and
- systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What should be happening / States to be achieved:

- the organization promotes positive behaviours at work to avoid conflict and ensure fairness;
- employees share information relevant to their work;
- the organization has agreed policies and procedures to prevent or resolve unacceptable behaviour;

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- systems are in place to enable and encourage managers to deal with unacceptable behaviour; and
  - systems are in place to enable and encourage employees to report unacceptable behaviour.

**Toronto East General Hospital: has systems in place to address unacceptable behaviour**

The “MIND” is one of three key priorities detailed in the TEGH Mental Wellness Strategic Plan. The goal is to provide the tools, resources and a work culture which supports mental wellness, including developing the employee’s ability to proactively recognize and manage potential threats to their mental well-being and fostering skills to develop and maintain positive relationships. Action items associated with this priority include the introduction of a Civil and Respectful Workplace Policy as well as a Workplace Violence Prevention Policy and relevant training on both to facilitate the creation of a workplace where everyone is entitled to be treated appropriately. The hospital has also provided “Emotional Intelligence for Work and Life” training for all employees (all new hires receive a minimum of four hours of training and the hospital is in the process of training all existing staff).

**Environics Communications: assesses job candidates for cultural fit before hiring**

Management at Environics Communications knows that a strong culture is easier to shape and maintain when you hire the right people; people that want to belong. During the hiring process, President Bruce MacLellan interviews all consultant candidates personally to ensure that new members of the team have the personality and skills to succeed with the organization and preserve the culture. By placing careful emphasis on emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills and traits, they have been successful in finding talented individuals who have not only great skills and experience, but also the kind of personality and commitment to teamwork that fit with their culture. A key interview question is always: “What would your colleagues say about you as a person on their team?”

## **5. Role**

This speaks to whether people understand their role within the organization and whether the organization ensures that they do not have conflicting roles.

The Standard is that:

- employees indicate that they understand their role and responsibilities; and
- systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What should be happening / States to be achieved:

- the organization ensures that, as far as possible, the different requirements it places upon employees are compatible;
- the organization provides information to enable employees to understand their role and responsibilities;

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- the organization ensures that, as far as possible, the requirements it places upon employees are clear; and
  - systems are in place to enable employees to raise concerns about any uncertainties or conflicts they have in their role and responsibilities.

**Protegra: gave employees a voice in defining workplace roles and culture**

Protegra continuously works to create a non-critical culture where employees feel comfortable being themselves and are encouraged to express their own ideas. In 2009, the company undertook a project to “codify their culture.” Called the Enduring Culture project, this became an opportunity for employees to define principles and practices for every role within Protegra. This is not a top-down directive of rules and regulations but a collaborative effort to ensure that everyone is aware of the responsibilities, expectations and behaviour required of each individual. In the end, the team created a “Perpetual Culture Machine” which is a dynamic technology that acts as a central repository for everything culture-related. This means the information on values, principles, and practices is centrally located and easily accessible for all employees.

**Delta Hotels and Resorts: provides clear information about team member roles and responsibilities**

To ensure that employees have a strong understanding of their roles and responsibilities, Delta has developed two complementary training programs for all team members. The first, a Skills Training program, is part of the on-boarding process for all new staff. Skills Training is primarily designed to set new employees up for success from a technical perspective, but it is also an opportunity to welcome new colleagues into the Delta community. Employees are trained by a peer, referred to as a Designated Trainer. To complement the Skills Training, Delta offers four separate modules of Brand Training which is designed to ensure that workplace behaviours are aligned with the company’s values. Both training programs are supported by a formal employee development review that occurs at regular intervals (the first 30, 60, 90, and 180 days of employment and annually subsequently).

## **6. Change**

This refers to how organizational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the organization.

The Standard is that:

- employees indicate that the organization engages them frequently when undergoing an organizational change; and
- systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.

What should be happening / States to be achieved:

- the organization provides employees with timely information to enable them to understand the reasons for proposed changes;

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- the organization ensures adequate employee consultation on changes and provides opportunities for employees to influence proposals;
  - employees are aware of the probable impact of any changes to their jobs. If necessary, employees are given training to support any changes in their jobs;
  - employees are aware of timetables for changes; and
  - employees have access to relevant support during changes.

**Toronto East General Hospital: consults employees on important organizational issues**

Workplace Culture is one of three key priorities detailed in the TEGH Mental Wellness Strategic Plan. The goal is to ensure that work policies and practices are aligned with promoting mental wellness. Action items associated with this priority include the formation of a Central Partnership Council (CPC), a group of representatives from every hospital area. All new information is shared among this group first and then rolled out to the entire staff community once every area has had the opportunity for input via their representative. The hospital also conducts continuous staff satisfaction surveying. For the past three years, they have surveyed quarterly (one quarter of staff per quarter). Management reports that they have recently added some questions that pertain specifically to mental health. One of these questions is: Did you feel we have done enough to promote mental wellness?

**Protegra: encourages a two-way dialogue between employees and management**

All organizational changes at Protegra are announced in an email and then followed up with greater detail at monthly company meetings when everyone is available and can ask questions if they have any. Suggestions, however, can be made at any time by speaking directly with management or a member of the Protegra Employee Committee (PEC). This committee was created to ensure that employees have a means through which to discuss sensitive issues. All discussions within PEC are kept confidential. Other channels for employee input include focus groups and annual workshops to discuss the progress made on last year's initiatives and make plans for the future. Focus group participation is optional but management at Protegra are pleased to report a steady increase in attendance over the last few years.



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## Q2: Do these management processes include additional features not addressed by British standards?

By using the Great Place to Work<sup>®</sup> Model<sup>®</sup> as a framework for the cultural assessment of each participating organization, a number of additional management processes were uncovered; while these **are** processes that support the psychosocial well-being of employees, they may not otherwise have been addressed by the British Management Standards.

The Great Place to Work<sup>®</sup> Model<sup>®</sup> examined each organization from two perspectives: the employee's and management's.

The employee experience was assessed using a Trust Index<sup>®</sup> survey which includes 58 standardized statements and 2 open-ended questions. For the purpose of this study, 12 additional questions pertaining to psychosocial health were added. From the employee's perspective, the definition of a great place to work is one in which you trust the people you work for, have pride in what you do, and enjoy the people you work with. Results from the employee survey will be further addressed in question five, which assesses the extent to which the management processes described here have been effective.

From management's perspective, a great place to work is one in which you achieve your organizational objectives, with people who give their personal best, and work together as a team/family. While there is no singular right way to create a great work environment, research from the Great Place to Work<sup>®</sup> Institute shows there are certain trust-building behaviours that are common among best workplaces.

When assessing management processes that contribute to a great work environment, there are nine key areas of practice to consider. The following diagram illustrates the framework used to assess management practices in each of the case study organizations.



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While there was some overlap between the Great Place to Work<sup>®</sup> Model<sup>©</sup> and the British Management Standards, there were also a number of management practices that may not otherwise have been identified had we used the British Standards exclusively. Specifically, the practice areas of (1) INSPIRING, (2) THANKING, (3) CARING, (4) CELEBRATING, and (5) SHARING elicited a number of novel ideas.

Exemplar management processes from these five practice areas are featured below. It is worth noting that these practices are not meant to be cut-and-paste solutions; rather, they are meant to spark discussion about the creative ways in which management can support the psychosocial well-being of employees.

Every organization has the potential to become a great place to work, regardless of size, union status or industry. And the good news is that high-trust relationships require behaviours that can be learned and embedded into any culture. Further, these are management practices that, in many cases, pose little or no budgetary burden on the organization.

## **INSPIRING**

In great workplaces, employees learn and understand how their job has meaning for the organization and for society, beyond earning a salary and making a profit for the business. To assess this aspect of the case study participants, each organization was asked:

*How do you inspire employees to feel that their work has more meaning than being just a job? To answer this question you may find it helpful to detail some of the specific features of your company's culture that employees are likely to regard as unique or distinctive, such as:*

- your company's values/mission/corporate philosophy/vision, etc.;
- stories about the history or about people that exemplify the company's values;
- the firm's reputation in the industry;
- the company's reputation for social responsibility; and
- the quality or impact of the company's products or services and other unusual characteristics of the company's culture.

The following are examples of best practices that may not otherwise be covered by the British Management Standards.

### **McDonald's: a commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility**

McDonald's Canada has made a significant and long-term commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility. Business practices have been adapted to meet the needs of an ever-changing world, with an understanding that while each restaurant operates locally, their position as a global brand brings with it significant responsibilities. McDonald's works with a lot of internal and external stakeholders to balance a complex and sometimes competing set of ethical, social and environmental considerations. There are challenges and potential trade-offs along the way, and there is always room for improvement. But as a company, they are committed to being a

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brand that customers trust to do the right thing. The company's commitment to the communities in which it operates is a cornerstone of this philosophy and employees can feel proud that in the past year alone, McDonald's Canada has raised more than \$7.1 million for Ronald McDonald House Charities of Canada and other local children's charities.

### **Environics: a company that lives its values**

Employees at Environics are inspired by the company's strong commitment to integrity in all that they do. Each team member knows that the overarching goal is to do the right thing: to give the best advice and propose the best course of action, even if it's unpopular or unwelcome. On the rare occasion that clients have been dishonest or disrespectful, Environics has terminated the relationship, regardless of how profitable or promising it may have been. Once, in the early days of their expansion into the U.S., it left them with a shiny new office, staff on the payroll and not enough business to break even and pay the bills. But the team only became stronger because there was a feeling of pride for having done the right thing and a renewed motivation to rebuild.

## **THANKING**

In great workplaces, management recognizes and rewards good work and extra levels of effort, and strives to create a climate of approval. To assess this aspect of the case study participants, each organization was asked:

*How does your company show appreciation and/or recognition for employees' good work and extra effort? If specific programs involve awards, please describe such details as their form (cash? gifts? certificates?) as well as how many employees receive them annually.*

The following are examples of best practices that may not otherwise be covered by the British Management Standards.

### **Delta Hotels and Resorts: offers multiple award programs**

Delta Hotels and Resorts has created Delta Celebrates, a national rewards and recognition programme that encourages colleagues to recognize each other. There are four levels of "Excellence Awards" (Individual Excellence, Team Excellence, Community Excellence, and Leadership Excellence) that recognize employees who provide exceptional guest service, best reflect the company's values, and act as community ambassadors for the hotel. There are also Regional Awards that recognize five truly exceptional employees (one per region). To recognize employee loyalty, Delta offers Service Awards after one complete year of service and every five years thereafter. In thanks for their dedication, employees are invited to choose from a catalogue of rewards.

### **Environics Communications: frequently thanks employees with generous rewards**

In addition to multiple ways of recognizing individuals and teams, Environics has developed some truly unique company-wide rewards. One popular method of thanking staff, that has now become a tradition, is taking the entire team to some of the hottest concerts and sporting events in the world. Over the years, they have seen performances by Madonna, The Rolling Stones, U2,

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Coldplay and the Toronto Maple Leafs. To celebrate the company's fifteenth anniversary in 2009, all employees were invited to a two-day retreat in Fort Lauderdale, Florida to celebrate their success as a business and as a great place to work. There are also generous long-service awards that recognize employee loyalty after 5 years (\$5,000 towards travel and an additional week of vacation), 7 years (engraved silver bracelet or cufflinks from Birks), 8 years (\$3,000 towards travel), and 10 years (a computer or television for their home).

## **CARING**

In great workplaces, a variety of systems and programs are in place for creating a caring environment for the individual and his or her family. To assess this aspect of the case study participants, each organization was asked:

- (a) Please describe any special or unique benefits / perks that you offer which show how your company cares about people as individuals not just as employees. When describing these programs, please provide us with any information (data or anecdotal) that indicates how these benefits or perks are exceptional within your industry or geographic community (citing the data source, if available).
- (b) What special programs does your company offer to help employees balance their work lives with their personal or family lives?
- (c) What formal and/or informal programs do you provide to support employees in times of need?
- (d) Describe any programs you have in place to promote diversity within your company, the philosophy behind your approach, and, if available, provide us with data showing how these programs have changed your workplace demographics and diversity within management over time.

The following are examples of best practices that may not otherwise be covered by the British Management Standards.

### **Canada Safeway Limited: is committed to diversity**

Safeway is an Equal Opportunity Employer and takes great care in building a diverse work team. To achieve this, the company has signed various Partnership Agreements with the Aboriginal community at both federal and provincial levels. Safeway also works with local agencies in order to hire employees with disabilities, mental health conditions, and learning disorders. As a result of Safeway's efforts to hire employees from these agencies, the company has won numerous awards across Canada for its efforts. To support their diverse workplace, Safeway has developed a Diversity Policy and Statement of Principles that is posted in every facility. This is accompanied by a Diversity Calendar to help educate managers and employees about various diversity related events/celebrations throughout the year. There are also diversity-related brochures and intranet updates to underline the importance of this initiative to the company.

### **Environics Communications: cares for staff in times of need**

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At Environics, there is never a question about what's important in life. Family leave is as long as it needs to be, and the only policy is to do what is right. Unfortunately, in 2009 three team members had to take extended sick leave. The company supported them emotionally and financially and has offered flexible schedules for their return to work to ease the transition back to working life and good health. In one of these cases, a colleague was diagnosed with breast cancer and required a nine-month leave to receive treatments. To support her, the company offered an early bonus for the current fiscal year to bridge her finances until the start of disability insurance payments. The team is further supporting her with regular notes, gifts, and a group participation in the 2009 Run for the Cure.

**Environics Communications: is committed to diversity**

Environics Communications has successfully cultivated a caring work environment by using a variety of innovative best practices. One example is the company's commitment to building a staff team that best reflects the community in which they operate. As a result, they have a diverse team of employees who speak more than 15 different languages including Italian, Mandarin, Tagalog, Polish, Korean, German, Arabic, Punjabi, Urdu, Hindi, Spanish, French and Portuguese. Recruiting efforts include speaking at local community colleges and inviting people to submit résumés, ensuring a diverse range of applicants. In 2007, they initiated an outreach program to a variety of ethnic media to ensure prospective applicants know that Environics is able and eager to meet their needs.

**CELEBRATING**

In great workplaces, celebrations of both personal milestones and company successes are built into the way people work together. To assess this aspect of the case study participants, each organization was asked:

- (a) In what ways does your company celebrate its successes?
- (b) How do you encourage fun and camaraderie among your employees?

The following are examples of best practices that may not otherwise be covered by the British Management Standards.

**Environics Communications: puts a personal touch on celebrations**

Environics takes every possible opportunity to celebrate and reward success. For example, on their twelfth anniversary all employees were asked to reflect on a favourite memory from their first day with Environics. Each person posted this memory on their office door and the team spent much of the day in gales of laughter, as colleagues circulated the office and read the mostly comical stories.

**Toronto East General Hospital: hosts regular celebrations**

TEGH hosts a variety of annual celebrations including staff picnics, a Halloween event, a Festive Holiday Dinner Dance and a Holiday Tea. The Executive Team is consistently involved in all events (i.e. they dress up for Halloween or sit in the dunk tank). There are also ad-hoc celebrations that highlight organizational successes. For example, ice cream sundaes were

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recently served to celebrate the hospital's successful Accreditation results, and there was a surprise staff appreciation "thank you" day held last year where each staff member was given a flower and thank you card as they entered the Hospital for their shift.

## **SHARING**

In great workplaces, employees share in the fruits of their labour in a variety of ways; rewards are egalitarian in nature. To assess this aspect of the case study participants, each organization was asked:

- (a) How does your company's approach to total compensation promote a sense of fairness within the company? In answering this question we would find it useful to learn about profit-sharing and/or bonus programs, employee ownership or gain-sharing programs, etc. We are especially interested in how your total compensation compares with other firms within your industry or geographic community (citing sources, if available).
- (b) Please detail any programs that you have to encourage employees to volunteer in their community.

The following are examples of best practices that may not otherwise be covered by the British Management Standards.

### **McDonald's Canada: matches charitable donations made by employees**

McDonald's Canada has developed a 100 percent matching program to support charitable causes. When employees donate \$25 and up to an eligible organization, McDonald's will match the donation 100 percent, up to \$5,000 annually. Additionally, employees are eligible to receive one day off from work each year to volunteer at an eligible organization.

### **Protegra: shares its profits with employees**

Protegra is 100 percent employee-owned and all employees, without exception, have a voice in the company's strategies and operations. To promote a sense of fairness and ensure that employees are compensated appropriately, Protegra conducts external salary surveys on an annual basis. Additionally, all employees have the option to purchase shares in the company, thereby becoming owners. Lastly, a profit sharing program recognizes employee contributions; amounts received vary based on a matrix of factors such as the amount of travel time / off-site work required from the employee.

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### **Q3: Why were the surveyed management processes implemented by the employers?**

In a series of telephone interviews, senior representatives from each participating organization were asked about their motivation for implementing the types of processes, policies and practices previously described in this report. In a recessionary economy, with competing demands and finite resources, it is often argued that an investment in these types of practices is no longer viable. So we asked, in essence, if they felt these efforts were still worthwhile. The response was a unanimous and unequivocal “yes.”

The motivating factors were generally twofold. First, it’s the **right** thing to do. Second, good people practices make good business sense.

This sentiment was reflected by Bruce MacLellan, President and CEO of Environics Communications, who indicated that although these practices, both formal and informal, evolved out of a personal commitment to people, he is first and foremost an entrepreneur, so it has to make good business sense too. A strong bottom line, he says “includes worker health and wellness”; the two are not mutually exclusive.

Mr. MacLellan believes management processes that keep people happy and motivated have been critical to the success of their business. This is especially true, he says “in a professional service model where your people are your best asset, but you could extend this thinking to any knowledge-based organization.”

Without exception, each of the best workplaces participating in this study indicated, either through hard data or anecdotal evidence, that their workplace culture (which includes good psychosocial management practices) does, in fact, contribute to the organization’s success.

Specifically, Best Workplaces participating in this study noted that a strong workplace culture has resulted in three distinct benefits. The first is an improved sense of wellness and overall satisfaction among employees. The second is improved service quality and subsequent client satisfaction. The third is a strengthened reputation in the community and increased brand awareness.

#### **Healthier/Happier Employees**

Ryan Caligiuri, Communications Coordinator with Protegra, believes that employee satisfaction is an essential ingredient for organizational excellence. “The pace and quality of work is proportional to the satisfaction of employees. You have to have the right processes in place to grow the business.”

While their approach to creating a great workplace may differ, this fundamental commitment to the well-being of employees is characteristic of all the workplaces featured in this study. “It’s all about people,” says Mr. Caligiuri. “This defines our culture. It is a key value. It’s the way we were built.”



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In all workplaces, even the best ones, the cost of employees that are not well can be significant. At the Toronto East General Hospital, a review of disability and health claims indicate that mental health disorders account for the most frequent long-term disability claims.

Consequently, the development of best practices with a specific focus on mental health has become a top priority for TEGH says Wolf Klassen, Vice President of Program Support. This situation is not unique to the Toronto East General Hospital; most workplaces are faced with the same challenge of reducing LTD claims. In the best workplaces, however, management takes a proactive approach to addressing psychosocial wellness, recognizing that it is ultimately in the best interest of both the employee and the organization.

### **Quality Customer Service**

The second benefit identified by case study participants is an increase in the quality of service provided to clients. This is directly related to the well-being of employees as discussed above.

As Janice Smith, with Delta Hotels and Resorts points out, “we can’t expect employees to create a welcoming and engaging environment for guests if they don’t first experience this as part of the workplace culture.”

A strong workplace culture is critical for delivering the best value to clients. In their Culture Audit<sup>®</sup> submission, management at Environics Communications notes that this has translated into new business opportunities for the company, as former employees who have gone on to careers in corporate public relations continue to seek out services from Environics. “We are proud that they have come to us first because they know first-hand our commitment to client[s] ... We feel that this a testament to the quality of our workplace and the friendships that we maintain, even with former employees.”

### **A Stronger Public Image**

The combination of healthy, happy employees and improved service to clients almost certainly results in a stronger public image, which is the third benefit and motivating factor identified by case study participants. According to management at Environics Communications, this commitment to people-friendly and earth-friendly practices “has paid unexpected dividends in reputation and in referrals” as they “continually win business because other successful companies identify with our goal of creating, maintaining and fostering a balanced and rewarding work environment.”

All of the best workplaces featured in this study have been publicly recognized with one or more significant workplace awards. Senior representatives from within these organizations consistently noted the considerable business benefits associated with having won these awards.

This sort of public recognition stimulates a renewed sense of pride among the team. It also creates an energy and organizational momentum that is very attractive to prospective employees and can become a significant benefit in the recruitment process. In their Culture Audit<sup>®</sup> submission, management at 1-800-GOT-JUNK? noted that such positive and public recognition



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has contributed to an increase in the quality of candidates applying for work; they further note that prospective employees consistently reference these awards during the interview process.

What these workplaces have identified is a virtuous circle where a commitment to employee well-being creates happier, more productive workers, which leads to an increase in service quality. The resultant increase in client satisfaction strengthens the organization's public image, which boosts business opportunities, fills existing staff with pride and bolsters recruitment and retention efforts.

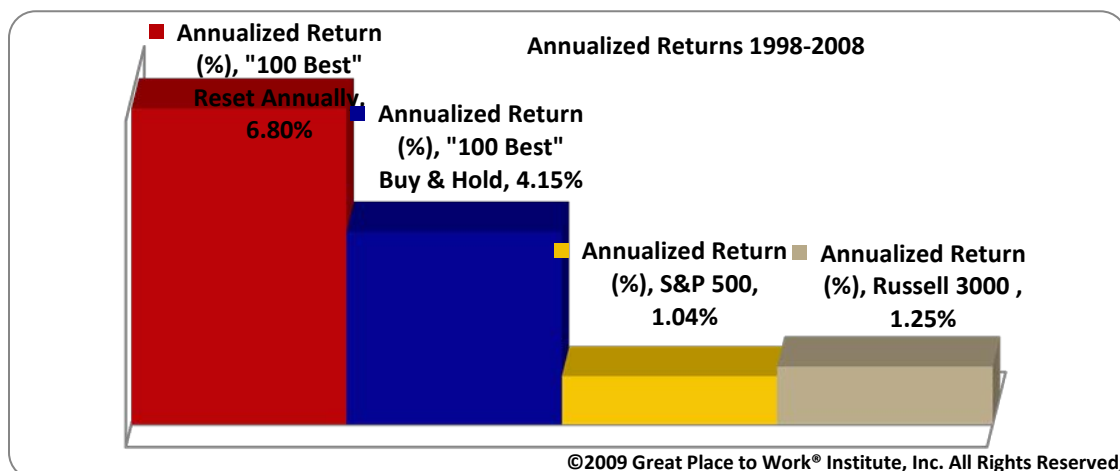
So while this sort of commitment to good people practices may have originally been motivated by a sense that it was the "right thing to do," the associated business benefits are substantial.

Research from the Great Place to Work<sup>®</sup> Institute confirms the anecdotal evidence collected from these case study organizations. According to Dr. Amy Lyman, "Lower voluntary turnover, higher numbers of job applicants, greater collaboration, and confidence in management's leadership abilities all contribute to the creativity, innovation, customer service and reputation that support the long term financial stability and success of great workplaces" (Lyman, 2008).

For companies in the private sector, this adds up to a strong bottom line. Independent research by the Russell Investment Group (2009) documents the superior financial performance of a hypothetical portfolio of publicly traded companies from the Fortune list of "100 Best Companies to Work For" in comparison with the S&P 500, and the Russell 3000. The graph below compares the performance of two portfolios of 100 Best Companies from 1998 through 2008, with the S&P 500 and Russell 3000.

The "Buy & Hold" portfolio assumes these 1998 list stocks are held through to 2008. The "Reset Annually" portfolio assumes these stocks are liquidated at the end of 1998 and proceeds used to reinvest in the 1999 list; a pattern which is repeated each year thereafter until 2008.

Over time, it is clear that companies on the Fortune list consistently outperform standard stock market indices. Dr. Amy Lyman theorizes that a "high level of trust helps people to cooperate more successfully with each other and to commit to the vision and future direction of the overall organization that they belong to" (Lyman, 2008).



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#### **Q4: Is each of the management processes components thought to be effective against work-related stress? If so, why?**

The ongoing commitment of resources to these practices and processes is the clearest evidence that management at best workplaces feel they are effective. Regardless of the underlying motivation, be it for altruistic reasons or as part of a larger business strategy, the outcome appears to be the same; a commitment to management processes that foster psychosocial wellbeing benefits both employee health and business health.

The ability, however, of most organizations to directly measure the impact of these programs and practices on work-related stress is limited. What these organizations are able to measure is participation rates in programs designed to reduce work-related stress. For example, the Toronto East General Hospital reports that:

- 40 percent of employees have completed Emotional Intelligence training. They have set 60 percent as a goal for 2010 and 80 percent as the goal for 2011.
- 100 percent of managers have completed the Occupational Health Training specific to Mental Health Management.

When these figures are coupled with more general indicators of psychosocial wellbeing, survey results for example, the organization may be able to draw some conclusions about the effectiveness of their programs and processes. The two most commonly used measurements of psychosocial health among case study organizations are EAP usage and employee surveys.

While the specific details of EAP usage are confidential, employers do receive aggregate trending reports that provide some insight into the well-being of employees. The goal is not to reduce the usage of an Employee Assistance Plan or Family Assistance Plan but rather to ensure *optimal* usage that might prevent or mitigate more expensive long-term disability claims.

Peter Darowski, the Director of Human Resources with Safeway, says the company has fostered a close relationship with their EAP provider to ensure that employees have access to quality care in a timely fashion. This is of particular importance, he says, in a recessionary economy where the numbers of stressors that employees face tend to increase. As one indicator of their commitment to this program, Canada Safeway has removed the limit on counselling sessions (previously capped at six) because management perceives great value in this program. Further, they have started offering e-counselling for employees who may have barriers that prevent the usage of more traditional counselling services.

The second commonly used measurement of psychosocial health in the workplace is employee surveys. At best workplaces, the employee experience is routinely measured through surveys or “pulse checks.” These organizations don’t just think their employees are happier, they know they are. The Toronto East General Hospital, for example, surveys quarterly (one quarter of staff per quarter). Management at TEGH say their staff, physician and volunteer satisfaction scores are consistently above industry average, providing some confirmation around the effectiveness of related programs and practices.

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Other measurements of psychosocial well-being include recruitment and retention statistics. The Toronto East General Hospital reports that vacancy rates have decreased from 6.95 percent to 3.05 percent, and the turnover rate has decreased from 12.16 percent to 6.76 percent. According to management, this further reflects the successful implementation of policies or practices that contribute to the health and well-being of physicians, staff, and volunteers.

Some case study organizations also report using measurements that are more typically linked to business health (i.e. client retention rate or revenue growth) as indicators of the psychosocial well-being of employees. While the nature of this connection is less tangible, management at these organizations stress the interrelated nature of employee health and business health. Environics Communications indicates their success, including 15 years of consecutive revenue growth and a top client retention rate of 6.2 years, is surely confirmation of the psychosocial well-being of employees.

In their Culture Audit<sup>©</sup> submission, management at Environics Communications also asserted that their many workplace awards, particularly those using employee surveys as the basis for selection, are further evidence of employee well-being. According to President and CEO, Bruce MacLellan, winning these awards has been a “terrific testament to what we had always personally believed, but never had been able to measure with empirical data. Our office has been tremendously proud of being recognized in such a way, and it has energized our organization and contributed to our success.”

Research from Great Place to Work<sup>®</sup> Institute supports the interrelated nature of employee health and business health. A whitepaper produced by Dr. Amy Lyman (2008) presents strong evidence of the positive long-term business success achieved when management is able to foster a high level of trust with employees. The report asserts that employees in this type of environment “show higher levels of cooperation within their teams and across departments and divisions, as well as higher levels of commitment to their own work, the work of the organization and to the vision of the organization’s leaders. The quality of the workplace culture that has been created leads to the creation of highly successful organizations that reap multiple benefits” (Lyman, 2008). Specific organizational benefits documented in Lyman’s whitepaper include: stronger long-term financial performance, lower turnover, more job applicants, and an integrated workforce in which diverse groups of people create and contribute to a common workplace culture of benefit to all.

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**Q5: Are these management processes thought to be effective in alleviating a wide range of workplace mental health issues? Or are they more effective in addressing some components?**

In a review of the Management Standards success thus far, the HSE (2009c) points to a set of shared risk factors between the most common health problems (including stress, anxiety and depression) as evidence of the need for a single (unified) approach to their management. The risks were found to be largely psychosocial in nature and relate primarily to “the design and management of work, work systems, and work organisations” (HSE, 2009c, pg. 2).

Given the interrelated nature of the risk factors, a solution that addresses one aspect of workplace mental health is likely to impact related issues. So while some programs are intended to address very specific components of health, there may be a “ripple effect” that results in unanticipated benefits.

For example, 1-800-GOT-JUNK? recently partnered with the Canadian Cancer Society to implement a smoking cessation program. Representatives from the Society worked with participating employees a few times each week for the duration of the program. Management reports that approximately six employees quit smoking as a result. In an interview with Craig Kacso, a recruiter for the company, he noted that while “this partnership was designed to address a fairly specific issue, we believe it also impacted the perception of our organization as a whole—as a company that is committed to supporting good health.”

This sentiment was reiterated by several other case study participants who referenced the wide range of interrelated benefits that result from a fundamental commitment to caring for people as opposed to outcomes associated with any one specific program or practice. Ryan Caligiuri, the Communications Coordinator with Protegra said they “put these programs and practices in place to ensure people aren’t overworked or stressed and are able to communicate their needs with the appropriate people. We do this so that people know they are valued and taken care of.”

Research from the Great Place to Work<sup>®</sup> Institute indicates that the best workplaces tend to have particularly effective policies and practices in nine key areas of management practice, as detailed in question 2. By surveying employees about their experience of work, we are able to assess the extent to which these management processes and practices have been effective.

From the employee’s perspective, the definition of a great place to work is one in which you **trust** the people you work for, have **pride** in what you do, and **enjoy** the people you work with.

The Great Place to Work<sup>®</sup> Model<sup>©</sup> is illustrated through the following table, which highlights the nine areas of management practice commonly found in workplaces where employees report strong levels of credibility, respect, fairness, pride and camaraderie. This Model<sup>©</sup> works well in almost any context and can be applied in any variety of organizations regardless of sector, size<sup>7</sup>,

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<sup>7</sup> To ensure anonymity, however, a minimum of 20 employees are required before using the Trust Index<sup>©</sup> survey.

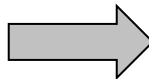
or geography. The nine practices areas are direct, comprehensive and action-oriented drivers of workplace trust—the foundation for quality jobs and performance excellence.

The flexibility of this Model<sup>®</sup> as seen in a variety of settings makes it a plausible candidate for adoption as part of a newly created Canadian Management Standards program.

### Great Place to Work<sup>®</sup> Model<sup>©</sup>

#### Key Management Practices

1. Hiring and Welcoming
2. Inspiring
3. Speaking
4. Listening
5. Thanking
6. Developing
7. Caring
8. Celebrating
9. Sharing



#### Resultant Dimensions of a Great Workplace as reported by employees

1. Credibility
2. Respect
3. Fairness
4. Pride
5. Camaraderie

**TRUST**

To assess the effectiveness of management processes in case study organizations, employees were surveyed using the Great Place to Work<sup>®</sup> Trust Index<sup>©</sup> survey. Each of the questions on this survey link directly to one of the five dimensions of a great workplace listed above. The exception to this is the final question on each survey, which is more global in nature and is often referred to as a “litmus test” of greatness.

		Taking everything into account, I would say this is a great place to work.	<b>86%</b>
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The scores provided here represent an average of employee responses from each of the case study organizations. The exception to this is McDonald’s Canada, which declined participation in this aspect of the study, citing survey fatigue as the reason. For their assessment, McDonald’s Canada submitted internal survey results conducted in the spring of 2009 by Universal Survey Research, LLC.

Of the remaining organizations, surveys were generally conducted between August and October 2009<sup>8</sup>. The following is a small sample of survey statements and average scores. The percentages have been calculated based on the numbers of employees responding “often true” or “almost always true” to each of the survey statements.

At the heart of this Model<sup>®</sup> is a philosophy that a great workplace is measured by the quality of three interconnected relationships. The first, and most complex, is the relationship between employees and management which, in great workplaces, is embodied by a deep sense of trust in managers that are credible, respectful, and fair.

**A great place to work is one in which you *trust* the people you work for...**

<b>Trust</b>	<b>Credibility</b>	Management keeps me informed about important issues and changes.	<b>85%</b>
		Management is approachable, easy to talk with.	<b>85%</b>
		Management’s actions match its words.	<b>81%</b>
	<b>Respect</b>	I am given the resources and equipment to do my job.	<b>84%</b>
		This is a psychologically and emotionally healthy place to work.	<b>83%</b>
		I am able to take time off from work when I think it’s necessary.	<b>87%</b>
	<b>Fairness</b>	I am treated as a full member here regardless of my position.	<b>84%</b>
		People avoid politicking and backstabbing as ways to get things done.	<b>76%</b>
		If I am unfairly treated, I believe I’ll be given a fair shake if I appeal.	<b>83%</b>

The second relationship identified here is that which an employee has with their job or organization. Employees need to have a tangible sense of the way in which their efforts contribute positively to both the organization and the community.

<sup>8</sup> Survey results for Canada Safeway Ltd. were obtained in Q4 of 2008.

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**A great place to work is one in which you have *pride* in what you do...**

	<b>Pride</b>	I'm proud to tell others I work here.	<b>88%</b>
		People look forward to coming to work here.	<b>78%</b>
		I feel good about the ways we contribute to the community.	<b>87%</b>

The third relationship identified by this Model<sup>©</sup> is that which an employee has with his or her co-workers. Employees need to experience a genuine sense of belonging within their work unit and the organization as a whole.

**A great place to work is one in which you *enjoy* the people you work with...**

	<b>Camaraderie</b>	I can be myself around here.	<b>88%</b>
		People care about each other here.	<b>78%</b>
		We're all in this together.	<b>87%</b>

In addition to the 58 standardized statements and 2 open-ended questions on the Trust Index<sup>©</sup> survey, 12 customized statements were included to ensure a comprehensive picture of the psychosocial well-being of employees in each of the participating organizations.

The following reflects the average score returned by employees at 1-800-GOT-JUNK?, Delta Hotels and Resorts, Environics Communications, Protegra, and the Toronto East General Hospital<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Since results from Q4 of 2008 were used for Canada Safeway, the 12 customized statements were not captured.

HRSDC Customized Statements	I am never expected to meet conflicting interests by various groups at work.	80%
	I know how to go about getting my job done.	96%
	I have achievable deadlines.	90%
	I am given supportive feedback on the work I do.	80%
	The level of intensity in my work feels manageable.	83%
	I never need to neglect some tasks because I have too much to do.	72%
	I am not pressured to work long hours.	84%
	I don't feel pressured to work too quickly.	77%
	I never have unrealistic time pressures.	76%
	I am supported through emotionally demanding work.	77%
	My line manager encourages me at work.	83%
	I feel safe from physical abuse in this workplace.	96%

The interrelated nature of mental health risk factors paired with strong survey results returned by employees in participating organizations suggests the management practices described in this report have been largely effective in fostering a broad sense of psychosocial well-being in the workplace.



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**Q6: What are the remaining knowledge gaps respecting the effectiveness of management best practices in fostering workplace mental health and how could they be addressed by additional research?**

In an attempt to examine how some Canadian employers have been successful in fostering psychosocial wellness in their workplace, a variety of exemplary management practices have been featured throughout this report. In this context, however, “best practice” may not be the most appropriate term since it suggests a status that is “better than” alternative management processes based on some method of relative comparison or benchmarking.

A substantial amount of research would be required to definitively label any of these practices as the “best” option. Rather, it might be more accurate to say these are management processes from outstanding organizations as evidenced by their receipt of prominent workplace awards or inclusion on a list of “Best Workplaces.”

Although there is some question around the terminology used, there is no question that the sharing of these management processes and practices is an extremely valuable process of collaborative learning. And while these are not meant to be cut-and-paste solutions, they can spark meaningful discussions about the creative ways in which management can best support the psychosocial well-being of employees.

This sort of practice sharing provides a tremendous opportunity for the concurrent growth of multiple organizations and would certainly enrich the Canadian application of a program such as the British Management Standards.

The Management Standards are considered, internationally, to be an exemplary approach to improving the psychosocial wellbeing of workers and so far are the only government-led strategy that has resulted in such a practical solution to the reduction of workplace stress.

However, before considering the implementation of this (or any similar) program in the Canadian context, it is worth reviewing the knowledge gaps, opportunities for development, and necessary modifications as recommended by a panel of experts from across the UK and EU after reflecting on the success of the Management Standard program thus far (HSE, 2009c).

Some of the key recommendations are summarized below with consideration for their application in the Canadian context.

### **Validity and Reliability Testing**

The Indicator Tool used as part of the British Management Standards is a self-administered questionnaire that measures employees’ responses to each of the six psychosocial dimensions that comprise the assessment model. This Indicator Tool allows organizations that might not otherwise have the resources for conducting employee surveys to do so. It also provides a set of national benchmarking standards against which organizations can assess the effectiveness of their management practices with regard to preventing work-related stress.

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However, a number of experts have addressed concerns with regard to the validity and reliability of the Indicator Tool and urged the HSE to provide further evidence of its accuracy (Kompier, 2004; Main, Glozier & Wright, 2005; Edwards, *et al.*, 2008). As such, prior to accepting this (or any equivalent) measurement tool, it will be crucial to thoroughly assess its validity and reliability within the Canadian context.

### **Organizational Capacity Development**

It is important to recognize that the ability of organizations to successfully implement a program such as the British Management Standards varies considerably; this discrepancy is largely related to the size of the organization, available resources, and the specific competencies of managers.

To successfully transition between risk assessment, action planning and the implementation of intervention strategies, the Canadian government can anticipate that participating organizations will require a varying, but often substantial, amount of support. As such, further research will be required to determine an optimal support system. One suggestion to come out of the British consultations on this matter is to provide “specialist intervention services at competitive and affordable rates (especially for smaller organisations)” (HSE, 2009c, pg. 31).

### **Action Planning and Implementation**

One of the primary critiques of the British Management Standards relates to a “discrepancy in emphasis between assessment and action...the latter being seen as the underdeveloped part of the process” (HSE, 2009c, pg. 29). The Management Standards are effective in identifying general areas of organizational weakness but provide little guidance when it comes to identifying specific ways to improve.

In part, this problem stems from a set of standards that are quite vague in nature. For example, there is a recurring requirement that “systems are in place for individuals’ concerns to be raised and addressed’ which, according to Kompier (2004) is very difficult to either confirm or deny (HSE, 2009c).

In this sense, using a model that is not sufficiently intuitive or action-oriented becomes problematic when its adoption is intended for wide spread public use. To some extent, these issues are addressed by the Great Place to Work<sup>®</sup> Model<sup>®</sup>, which outlines nine action-oriented areas of management practice that are comprehensive yet flexible enough to be used in almost any organization.

For example, the British Management Standard of CHANGE, which requires that managers effectively communicate organizational change, corresponds loosely with the Culture Audit<sup>®</sup> practice areas of SPEAKING and LISTENING. These latter practice areas highlight the need for a two-way dialogue between management and employees on a variety of workplace issues (not just change). While both models elicit similar types of management processes, follow-up actions are more intuitively apparent using the practice areas of SPEAKING and LISTENING.

Using a model that is more directly action-oriented and intuitive will reduce the need for capacity development of organizations as discussed above.

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## Building a Business Case

Throughout the consultative process there was widespread agreement that a business case should be developed to provide economic arguments for managing stress. This was seen to be of particular relevance in a recessionary economic environment when it becomes increasingly difficult to justify the allocation of scarce resources “based solely on the reduction of long-term harm to employees” (HSE, 2009c, pg. 8).

However, this does not appear to be the position of case study organizations featured in this report. As detailed in question 3, management at these organizations repeatedly identified the interrelated nature of employee health and business health. So, although we have studied a narrow grouping of exceptional employers in this report, it does suggest that there is at least some readiness to commit resources to the psychosocial well-being of employees in the Canadian context.

But there is still a business case to be built. Even in those organizations that espouse the interrelated nature of employee and business health, incentives may be required to encourage their participation in a government-led program. Participation will inevitably require substantial organizational resources in terms of employee time (even if the program is offered at no financial cost). As such, further research is required to identify an incentive structure that would encourage a variety of organizations to participate. In this context, particular attention should be given to the incentives required to motivate participation of small businesses or micro-organizations.

## Practical Applications for Small and Micro-Organizations

On the whole, there has been widespread recognition that further development would be required in order to make the Management Standards more practical for small or micro-organizations. This is a particularly important point within the Canadian context since the vast majority of businesses are small.

In large part, this problem stems from issues around anonymity and confidentiality that occur when trying to adapt the Indicator Tool (survey) to organizations with less than 20 employees. This is one application that is not well served by either the British Management Standards or the Great Place to Work<sup>®</sup> Model<sup>®</sup>. Further consideration is required to find a practical solution for the small businesses and micro-organizations in the Canadian context.

## Developing a Broader Application

During the consultative process “[s]everal experts mentioned that broader organisational level determinants of work-related health are noticeably omitted from the assessment tool (these include, for example, organisational culture, degree of the organisations’ employee orientation (i.e. the organisation’s focus on employee issues), open communication, organisational trust, justice or fairness, and employee involvement)” (HSE, 2009c, pg. 28).

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It was agreed that this broader approach should emphasize good management and “not separate the management of work-related stress from the management of other work-related health problems” (HSE, 2009c, pg. 32). In part, this issue is addressed by the Great Place to Work<sup>®</sup> Model<sup>®</sup> which, as detailed in question 2, provides for the assessment of a more comprehensive set of management practices and encourages organizations to move beyond a workforce that is merely “satisfied” or “engaged” to one in which employees are “inspired.”

## Conclusion

Research has shown that the cost of mental health issues in the workplace can be significant; they exert a human toll on individuals, impede productivity, and generate substantial societal costs. The data also show that work-related stress is of particular concern.

This report has examined how some Canadian employers have been successful in fostering psychosocial wellness in their workplace through a limited number of case studies centred on management processes.

These processes were further assessed for alignment with Great Britain’s Management Standards program which is considered, internationally, to be an exemplary approach to improving the psychosocial well-being of workers. Although other countries have addressed the issue, no other government led strategy has resulted in such a **practical** solution.

In Canada, the federal government is uniquely positioned to provide a leadership role in the development of a national approach to the mental health and well-being of workers. The newly created Mental Health Commission will be an important partner in this endeavor given its mandate to develop Canada’s mental health strategy.

Importing a program such as the British Management Standards offers an appealing strategy for reducing workplace stress in Canada and certainly meets the Mental Health Commission’s search for solutions that are “practical, useful, and adaptable to the differing realities of each jurisdiction and sector” (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2009, pg. 10).

The Canadian employers identified in this report have demonstrated a fundamental commitment to the well-being of their employees, consistently noting the interrelated nature of employee health and business health. While these organizations are not typical, having already been recognized as “Best Workplaces,” their commitment to psychosocial wellness does signal the potential readiness for this type of effort amongst other organizations.

By carefully reviewing the expert recommendations for a modified Management Standards program, Canada has the opportunity to develop a more polished version of this already very successful program. Specifically, this will require continued testing of the survey tool and further reflection on options for the development of organizational capacity and ways to support employers as they transition from assessment to action.

Of critical importance will be the development of an incentive structure that motivates organizations to participate in this type of program. Even when there is no financial cost

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involved, participation still requires a substantial commitment from organizations and has costs in terms of employee time. Most large organizations already have well-developed systems for surveying employees and may be reluctant to risk “survey fatigue” in participation. Smaller organizations may have more interest in this type of program but lack the resources that participation would require. Further, the Indicator Tool (survey) is not well adapted for use in organizations with less than roughly 20 employees.

Nonetheless, the Management Standards do show good promise as a practical solution for reducing workplace stress. Further, a growing body of evidence suggests that this type of approach might also have a broader relevance to the management of other workplace health problems. Although addressing these issues will be challenging, it also presents an opportunity for organizations to demonstrate their care and commitment to employees; the rewards for which are significant and have the potential to create positive repercussions for individuals, for organizations and for society.

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