

ARE YOU A BALANCED LEADER?



A human capital management survey was conducted in early 2009 by [APQC](#). The survey indicates the top challenge of its members and customers is “clearly rewarding, retaining, and engaging remaining employees”.

The recent boom and bust experience demonstrates the shift in challenges that plague business leaders and human resources professionals. In Alberta, employers went from struggling to recruit and retain employees to seeking ways to minimize costs, maximize productivity, and motivate and retain remaining employees. Couple this shift with rising global competition, the need to retain an engaged and productive workforce is paramount to achieving a competitive advantage.

With predictions of slow economic growth on the horizon, smart business leaders, like Nash Virji, President and CEO of [Elite Fleet Courier](#), are looking to learn from past experience. Virji states, “Although our business has seen an increase since the recession, we want to use this slower period to enhance how we motivate and retain people. Our aim is to create an even better work environment - one that recruits and retains talented employees as we experience business growth.” Many other business leaders continue to express their desire to minimize or, better yet, avoid the need for “warm body recruiting” during the next boom period.

These business leaders are seeking ways to develop leadership skills, despite the need to cut costs. They know that if they want to attract talented people and avoid high rates and costs of turnover as the economy picks up, they need to invest in people. APQC contends that investing in employees is critical to “come out ahead of the game when the economy improves”. Leadership development is imperative to investing in employees. Virji is looking at doing just that with his leadership team.

When it comes to developing leaders who retain a productive and engaged workforce, it is vital to get the overall balance right. Improving productivity *and* engaging employees need to be balanced priorities for all leaders. However, not all leaders understand this balance.

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Some leaders are very **people-oriented** and may have difficulty requesting improved performance. As a result, employees are happy but may not be performing to their potential.

- **People Oriented Leaders** focus their concerns on the people they lead. Teams with this type of leader will experience high levels of trust. Team members will enjoy being a part of this team. However, a leader who concentrates most of their energy on building relationships with employees may be doing so at the expense of productivity. Team performance and quality standards may be low, poor performance may be tolerated, and talented team members who want to achieve more may get frustrated and leave.

Some leaders are more **task-oriented**. These leaders are great at getting the “most work” out of people, but at the expense of creating an autocratic work environment for their team.

- **Task Oriented Leaders** focus their priority on getting things done. They view employees as a means to an end. Although they may achieve high levels of performance, this may be met with high levels of absenteeism, employee sabotage and information hoarding. These leaders may find their team suffers from a lack of fresh ideas, low levels of trust and a “revolving door syndrome”.

Establishing a **balanced approach to leadership** ensures employees are both productive and engaged in the business. Engaged and productive employees, not just happy ones, drive organizational outcomes.

- **Balanced Leaders** focus their energies on the people *and* task side of getting the job done. As a result, these leaders get better results, build morale, improve quality, and develop both the team and productivity.

In summary, balanced leaders are successful in creating a healthy and productive work environment. One where people, the leader, and the organization survive and thrive.



We'd like to hear from you. How are you preparing for the next boom? [Click here to answer a one-minute survey.](#) A summary of responses will be included in our next newsletter.

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