

Should Your Holiday Parties Be Lit? Will Mary Jane Be Coming?

# YOUR WORKPLACE

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Work-Life Balance  
is ~~Obs~~olete

+ Performance  
Reviews Are Dead

+ Who Wants Six Extra Vacation  
Days for Not Smoking?

+ How to Destress  
Work Stress



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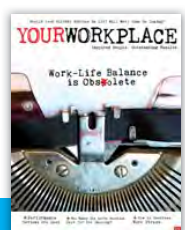
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# Surprise!

## *Multitasking Decreases Productivity*

In our desire to get more done, it seems like everyone, everywhere, is purporting to be a master of multitasking. The science proves this is not the case, however, with only 2% of us actually being good at it. As for the remaining 98% of people, multitasking can do more harm than good. We feel like we're accomplishing more when, in fact, studies suggest that trying to focus on more than one thing causes a 40% drop in productivity and even a 10% drop in IQ. Shockingly, those drops in IQ are equivalent to missing a night of sleep, according to studies conducted by Joshua Rubinstein, Jeffrey Evans and David Meyer.

In this issue we take a look at what multitasking is, how the brain responds to more than one activity (whether we are dual-tasking or task-switching), and the impact of multitasking on our ability to focus and get work done.

Once again mental health has found a place on our pages. More days of lost work are caused by mental illness than any other chronic conditions such as diabetes, asthma and arthritis. Today's organizations have become increasingly aware of the importance of mental health services and are finding ways to formalize and integrate a mental health component within their existing wellness programs. *Your Workplace* interviewed The Royal Canadian Mint to learn how they normalized conversations about mental health in their workplace.

We delve into the holiday season festivities at work, exploring what some workplaces plan to do to celebrate, and we look at whether cannabis will occupy the same space as alcohol both in terms of recreation and workplace policy. Our experts examine performance reviews, negativity bias, and workplace wellness, and we share the top five steps to keep your sanity and stay emotionally healthy this holiday season. We speak with Dr. Jamie Gruman on how to decrease workplace stress. Plus we share how people are wearing pyjamas to work — although we don't think you should too.

And of course we also invite you to peruse the usual expert commentaries, company profile, healthy recipe (how nootropics optimize cognitive health and function — check it out), and book reviews.

Enjoy this issue, and don't forget we love your feedback. If you have a great idea you want to share — or a beef you want to vent — give us a shout at [editorial@yourworkplace.ca](mailto:editorial@yourworkplace.ca).

Happy working, happy reading, and from all of us at Team YW — make work better! 



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**EDITORIAL**  
**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**  
Vera Asanin

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Organizational Psychologist

Kim Macey, BBA, CHRP  
VP, Human Capital, DP World

**EDITOR**

Joel Kranc  
[jkranc@yourworkplace.ca](mailto:jkranc@yourworkplace.ca)

**COPY EDITOR**

Wade Guyitt  
[editorial@yourworkplace.ca](mailto:editorial@yourworkplace.ca)

**CONTRIBUTORS**

Gilles Beaudin  
Alice Chen  
Craig Dowden, PhD  
Denise Hansen  
Max Lugavere  
Anna Mittag  
Steve Robbins  
Isabel Rut  
Ann Marie Sabath  
Lisa Sansom, MAPP  
Dr. Jaty Tam

**ART****ASSOCIATE ART DIRECTOR**

Anthony Aird

**PHOTOGRAPHY**

Stephen Wild  
Stockphotosecrets  
Unsplash

**BUSINESS TEAM  
PRESIDENT**  
Vera Asanin

**DEPUTY PUBLISHER**  
Joel Kranc

**ACCOUNTING**  
Huamei Zhou

**SALES AND ACCOUNT  
MANAGEMENT**  
Margo Bock  
mbock@yourworkplace.ca

Jillian Buitert  
jbuitert@yourworkplace.ca

**WEBSITE**  
ResIM

**SUBSCRIPTION INQUIRIES**  
subscribe@yourworkplace.ca  
1-855-997-5223  
2-33 Thorne Ave.,  
Dartmouth, NS, B3B 2E7

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subscribe@yourworkplace.ca

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**Re: Employees Need Boundaries not Walls (Vol. 20, Issue 4)**

This article was very interesting to read because I work in a manufacturing site which is very different than an office environment. We have not made any changes to our workspace design and sometimes I wonder if we could experience better efficiencies if we shifted things around. Have you done any articles about more industrial spaces? In the meantime you have given me some ideas to think about. Thanks.

W. J. HARLEY

I always love to read the work of David Ulrich. He can write in a really academic and technical manner. I quickly get what he is talking about and it resonates with me. So I was pumped to see the article, *Is Your Culture Transformation Journey Going Nowhere Fast?* (Vol. 20, Issue 5). I liked how he talked about the use of Glassdoor to help assess the culture of two merging companies, and he went as far as to state that the gap between the two ratings caused by a change in purchase price. What a big statement, and proof, actually, that culture is having a big impact on the bottom line. I also like his diagram and how he makes the connection between employees and the customer. All around a great article. Keep encouraging him to write. His words are making an impact.

R. MEAGHER



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# Performance Reviews Are Dead

Is there any way to revive performance reviews and bring them into the 21st century?

» BY CRAIG DOWDEN, PHD

**T**here are very few organizational activities that draw equal discomfort from managers and employees alike. Annual Performance Reviews (APRs) continue to be a challenging process for both parties. This process, often dreaded and dismissed as pointless, involves an employee sitting down with his or her supervisor or line manager to review their performance before being “rated.” The process is abhorred for a variety of reasons, including a view that the feedback is untimely and that there is no mechanism — or effort — year-on-year to act on anything in the review.

**The Cornerstone OnDemand/Harris 2012 U.S. Employee Report showcased some startling and troubling findings:**

- 55% report that their APR is not a fair and accurate representation of their performance.
- Approximately two-thirds (67%) indicate that there was surprising feedback in their review, which goes against all best practices.
- Sadly, three-quarters of employees mention that they are not given any specific behavioural examples to support the feedback delivered.

Not surprisingly, considerable voices have joined the chorus to disband these unhelpful annual traditions. So what can we do differently?

An interesting and powerful idea, introduced by Dan Pink in his internationally best-selling book *Drive*, is to consider inviting your employees to take the reins and conduct their own Do-It-Yourself (DIY) performance review, preferably on a monthly basis.

**This more frequent and employee-led approach is valuable on multiple levels, allowing feedback to:**

- become less threatening through familiarity
- provide opportunity for real-time change and improvement
- become a part of your culture rather than an annual or semiannual event

Perhaps the most important and distinct advantage is that it invites your employees to bring up their areas of challenge taking the burden off of you, as the leader. In addition, it can even shed light on unexpected issues.

For instance, say you are preparing for a performance review with an employee and have a list of points to cover. Although a lot of it is positive, you feel some items are going to be challenging to deliver. Now, instead of delving into your list right away, turn to your employee and say, “I’d love to hear your thoughts. Where do you think things

are going well? What opportunities do you feel exist where you might be able to improve?”

In answering, the team member may well address many of the items on your list, including some things you may not have considered. It is an excellent opportunity to identify hidden strengths while also raising your attention to areas of struggle that you may not have been aware of.

In addition, it takes advantage of the reciprocity principle. By affording your employees the opportunity to take the lead on crafting their own performance review, you maximize the chances that they will be open to, and interested in, hearing your comments and observations when the time comes.

This approach also provides a valuable opportunity for you to ascertain their levels of self-awareness. If an employee’s performance is low or lacking, you may want to monitor him or her more closely and coach around any blind spots you observe.

Some of the largest global organizations are in the midst of getting rid of annual or semi-annual performance reviews and are instead making them an ongoing, embedded part of company culture.

In 2016, for example, Adobe surveyed 1,500 office workers in the U.S. and found that 88% went through the standard performance review process, with written reviews, rankings and ratings on a regular basis. Managers reported spending an average of 17 hours per employee preparing for a performance review, with very little perceived return on investment. In fact, 59% of the survey respondents reported that these reviews had no impact on how they did their jobs. Instead, the process created stress, drove employees into needless competition with each other and sometimes resulted in tears or employees quitting outright.

What workers are looking for, the survey asserts, is “a collaborative process with regular and qualitative feedback.”

Thus, Adobe eliminated its annual performance review, instead opting for what it calls the “Check-In,” a process that “focuses on two-way dialogue between

manager and employee on an ongoing basis rather than heavy process and formal rankings.”

Since implementing this model, Adobe estimates that it has saved more than 80,000 manager hours per year, which is the equivalent of 40 full-time employees. With the growth in headcount since that time, the company estimates it saves over 100,000 manager hours per year and is now demonstrating higher retention, employee engagement and stronger performance management.

Change is afoot. Yet we must remember that any positive review process must include the manager asking his or her employee whether they are receiving the support they require to successfully fulfill their role. Management consultant W. Edwards Deming pointed out that if you only focus on individual performance, you turn a blind eye to the systemic deficiencies that may be holding people back from doing an excellent job, no matter how talented and/or committed they are. Make sure you explore this with your employees to ensure they, and you, get the most out of the experience. Don’t fear the feedback. **W**



This article is based on **Craig Dowden's** (Ph.D.) forthcoming book, *Do Good to Lead Well: The Science and Practice of Positive Leadership*. Craig Dowden & Associates is a firm focused on supporting clients in achieving leadership and organizational excellence by leveraging the science of peak performance. [www.craigdowden.com](http://www.craigdowden.com)