

Human Capital & Effective Organizations Certificate Program (HCEO) Graduation Ceremony, May 7, 2013

Sue McNab

Distinguished Professors, fellow HCEO graduates, Colleagues, sponsor company representatives and guests,

Three years ago, I attempted to explain to my CEO, who leads a P&C insurance company, why as C.P.S.O of my company, and in addition to my SPHR and my ACC, that I would like to be supported in pursuing a HCEO certificate to add to my MBA and MA and BA; and all this in our company, which tries very hard to outlaw acronyms as part of our corporate language.

After a bit of translation, he supported me in applying. So the journey began into achieving a certificate for Human Capital and Effective Organizations study culminating here this evening. And what an adventure and journey it has been.

You think it's just about ticking off the requirements of 5 courses, bringing ROI to your company through new ideas, creative methods and *out of the box* thinking from those courses. There's the side challenge of learning to navigate the Los Angeles airport or Redondo Beach's parking lots. But it was more – so much more it was a chance to grow in my field, network with colleagues and have a glass or two of wine with the professional rock stars of Human Capital. It was an opportunity to learn from everyone who crossed my path or shared a work challenge or a successful intervention or a lunch with me. More specifically, my new tools for the professional journey have some memorable nuggets I'd like to share tonight. This will be sort of the "HCEO certificate in 10 minutes;"

First - Organizing your business around your customer can reduce complexity, grow your business and nurture effective communications. And we did that at PEMCO, creating a team of organizational design subject matter experts from both Operations and Human Resources. It made org design an ongoing process not just a project.

In the same program, I also learned that a box of Tide at Walmart may be a different size in the fine print by ounces, than it may be at a regular grocery store

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– so it can fit on the shelves at Walmart. Walmart can suggest to P&G they do that, and they did, plus relocate their sales people to Bensonville, Arkansas.

Second - with the right tools and the right methods, major changes can appear seamless to the end user. Planning helps make it happen and attention to STRATEGIC IMPACT, as well as striving for transaction excellence, enhances the result. I also learned that Oracle acquired Sun Microsystems and moved 26,000+ employees to their programs and benefits (by country) overnight electronically and for the most part, successfully. That was amazing, and speaks to the power of technology transactions in making the strategy successful through PROCESS well executed.

Third - whenever I felt overwhelmed by the dynamics and complexity of turning 2000 employees in eleven companies into two companies focused on insurance with only 800 staff, I thought of my colleagues at Unilever or Microsoft or Nokia or Disney and the thousands of employees they serve globally, - sometimes in 30 languages. My complexity issues as a two state, one country (even though it is the Pacific Northwest) entity didn't seem as complex as they once did! If they could do it, we could despite the hurdles of traditionalism and culture change challenges.

Fourth - I learned that the data can tell a story and that death by PowerPoint with miniscule numbers that challenge even a 30-year-old's vision, can be avoided successfully. It is so much more compelling to create a message with words and pictures rather than just numbers. And with my NW local colleagues from Boeing and the Gates Foundation, we have continued to coach each other in the challenge of presenting a case for change using data that is exciting, interesting and effective...plus my drawing skills have been greatly enhanced and stick figures, sign posts, arrows and caricatures no longer intimidate me. I actually like graphics now - and clear charts and one picture prompts.

Fifth Nugget - the investment we make in learning and growing talent assures the future of a company. Learning is about helping high potentials grow in their skills

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but it is also about helping them find the North Star that guides them – defined as “the inner strength and dynamic of their personal leadership” and their own personal brand. At PEMCO, we translated those learnings into an Interactive Leadership series. There were a few moments of panic and resume polishing when I told my boss, the CEO, that I was bringing a poet to explore leadership with 120 managers, but it all worked out. The inspiration for the content, not the poet, came from the CEO class.

It also led us at PEMCO, to abandon the traditional model of succession talent management and develop a self-nomination process for high potentials that has received national recognition for its format and design. Most importantly, our high potentials are encouraged to stand for themselves and design their career around their self-development and self-knowledge and passion. The pace of change in our company exceeds the capacity for individual learning so respecting that personal desire has strength in development and sharing capability is key to our future growth of talent within the company – our collective human capital capabilities is our strategic edge.

Each course delivered results and each session helped me navigate a challenge or a dynamic through leading my team in a different way with new skills and insights – nuggets I took home for the journey.

My staff was always a little nervous when I returned from the HCEO class knowing we’d be trying something new and different soon!

We’re still growing as a company; we’re still beating Geico and Progressive in the Northwest at their own game; we’re still redesigning our organization as a business strategy and everyone can tell you what is meant by the Star Model, even if they are in customer service – even the receptionist knows and understands what it is!

It’s not only the influence of HCEO and the center OR bringing Dr. Boudreau and Dr. Worley separately to work with our management teams, but it has been a spark for igniting our success and our change management. My HCEO

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participation has helped us with exciting new resources to weather the storms of culture change.

So, alphabet soup lives on and the journey is just beginning – but the vessel is stronger, the sails are set, the charts are accurate and the destination is success.

I'm "graduating" with my top ten headlines as a HCEO graduate. Here they are;

10) Cleveland is actually a destination of choice these days for anyone interested in sustainability – there is a brewery, a community produce operation and a food market there that proves motivated businesses can affect SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES - and the beer is good.

9) Agility is not just a term used by dog trainers – it's a fresh and exciting way to look at change and a worthy goal for companies adopting to their environment and looking to high performance.

8) Laser focus has been mastered on my part – having attended twelve full days of classes here in this building while any number of sailboats cruised by the window. My passion is boats for those who I haven't met or who haven't figured it out yet. I'm hoping my HCEO certificate can help me work anywhere on the planet, like Tonga or Fiji, someday when I sail around again.

7) HR people and OD people don't always see eye to eye, don't always speak the same language, don't always work in the same department and don't always 'get each other', but through HCEO influences, there is hope and possibility to heal the gap SOMEDAY. We even talked to each other and smiled in class!

6) Forget seeking a "seat at the table" HR people, arm yourself with the knowledge found in the HCEO program pursuit and just sit down.

5) Environmental scanning activities can bring the generations together especially with Gen Y'ers in the room – they have no idea what a typewriter is.

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4) Dr. Lawler loves data. Dr. Boudreau likes Lee jeans and yoga. Dr. Worley likes seafood in whatever form it comes and Lacy loves vinegar – gourmet vinegar. She’s a balsamic girl.

3) Nokia is the most used cell phone on the planet and 2 billion times a day a Unilever product is used by someone.

2) When you are at Disney, consider yourself very special and in the know, because you understand you bypass the line at guest services. As an HCEO graduate, you’ll find a sweeper to answer your questions – they are pivotal.

And finally, on a serious note the TOP HEADLINE as an HCEO graduate is this:

All the alphabet soup of HCEO – HRPS - SPHR etc. means little if we don’t use our skills to impact our organizations. The future of talent growth and organizational transformation depends on making the principles we’ve learned come alive in our companies, our countries and on our planet. Our challenge is to make our world, ourselves, and our organizations better places for people to bring their whole selves to work, to drive success for the betterment of business, to collaborate among peers and to enhance the planet.

That’s agile, that’s pivotal, that’s sustainable and that’s the future journey. Whatever we do, we can’t forget those “sweepers” or your equivalent, making them effective human capital is the key. So on to the challenges, the journey, the adventure – “there is nothing, absolutely nothing, quite as wonderful as messing about in boats” or Human Capital. Let’s launch!