

## Recruit, Retain, Reduce Employee Turnover

The man of many figures has gone and done it again. Don Mills (below right), the statistical aficionado at the helm of Corporate Research Associates, has once more demonstrated his prognosticator-like talent for assessing the region's business culture and identifying emerging trends.

Just two months after the Halifax Chamber of Commerce published its *Report on Population Crisis* with its attendant message that the employee talent pool is drying up as the population ages and shrinks, Don Mills was ready with a new human resource assessment program to help SMEs address that challenge. Corporate Research Associates has teamed up with survey experts ClearPicture Corporation to launch TalentManagementRX.com - reportedly an efficient and inexpensive tool that allows Small-to-Medium-sized companies to measure employee engagement.

"SMEs have been traditionally underserved in terms of employee research," asserts Mills. "They don't usually have the budget or human resource staff to undertake comparative analyses of how they perform in relation to other companies in their industry, region and marketplace. Without that information, they can't make informed decisions on how and where to improve their HR strategies. That's where we come in."

In exchange for a basic registration fee of \$500 a year that covers up to 25 employee participants (the more participants, the higher the fee), companies will be able to survey staff members via a secure, encrypted web portal. The online survey will measure employee engagement and assess the participating company in terms of human resource benchmarks such as compensation and benefits, organizational leadership and employee development. Customized surveys can be added to the base package for an additional fee.

Mills says that participating companies will not be ranked from best to worst, though he will engage the public by discussing trends that emerge from the aggregated results. Eventually, when the number of participating companies reaches "critical mass", Mills and company hope to celebrate the top five performers in each Atlantic province. Based on qualitative research, Mills says he expects between 50 and 100 companies to sign up for TalentManagementRX.com in its first year.



## Making Spinach Safe



In 2006, millions of people stopped buying fresh spinach and prepackaged iceberg lettuce when E.coli-tainted produce caused 276 illnesses and three deaths in North America. The likelihood of that happening again may soon be significantly reduced, thanks to Wayd McNally and the company he founded, Sensor Wireless Inc. of Charlottetown, PEI.

McNally's company merges sensor and wireless technologies with GPS tracking systems to create unique quality control mechanisms. Think of the 'Crackless Egg', a technology-loaded simulated egg that experiences and transmits data which can be used to identify problem areas throughout the production line and delivery systems. A similar technology is about to be used to monitor food safety hazards associated with fresh and fresh-cut leafy greens.

For the next four years, Sensor Wireless will be working with the University of Georgia, Michigan State University, Clemson University, Auburn University and the Illinois Institute of Technology/FDA National Center for Food Safety and Technology to identify pre- and post-harvest E. coli intervention strategies.

The project is valued at \$600,000, of which Sensor Wireless will receive an undisclosed amount for its hardware, software and service.

## Making the Grade

Of the 2,000 companies across Canada that vied for the honour of being one of the country's Top 100 employers, six Atlantic Canadian organizations made the final cut. Compiled by Mediaworld Canada Inc., Canada's Top 100 Employers were judged according to their physical workplace; work and social atmosphere; health, financial and family benefits; vacation and time off; employee communications; performance management; training and skills development; and, community involvement. The winners are considered to be industry leaders for their ability to attract and retain quality employees.

Company / Location	# Employees	Reasons for Inclusion
<b>Assumption Mutual Life</b>	223	Supports ongoing employee skills development with financial bonuses, Moncton a mentoring program and career planning services.
<b>Capital District Health Authority, Halifax</b>	6,264	Committed to employee wellness, providing healthy cafeteria options, a religious observance room and a nap room for employees who need a break during the day.
<b>DeltaWare Systems,</b>	91	Encourages ongoing employee education through tuition subsidies for in-house and Charlottetown external courses.
<b>The Halifax Herald, Halifax</b>	325	Gives employees a paid day off on their birthdays.
<b>Johnson Incorporated, St. John's</b>	1,066	Encourages employees to pursue professional designations by offering financial bonuses (up to \$2,000) upon successful completion.
<b>NB Power, Fredericton</b>	2,465	Operates a unique earned time-off program that lets employees take leaves of absence (up to two months).

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Victorian Order of Nurses (VON) Canada is well-known for its visiting and clinic nursing, home care services, health and wellness programs, immunization clinics, occupational health programs, foot care clinics, palliative care - and the list goes on, but VON is equally familiar for its charitable community support programming\*, such as:

- Adult Day Programs
- Caregiver Support
- Seniors Info Line
- Vial of Life
- Volunteer Transportation
- Meals on Wheels
- Security Checks
- Volunteer Visiting

\* Community Support Services differ from region to region according to the needs present in the community, volunteer availability, and providing there are sufficient funds raised from the local community to support program needs.

VON Canada has 24 sites across the Atlantic region. You can help VON provide programming in your area by contributing to your local VON site.

To learn more about VON, visit [www.von.ca](http://www.von.ca).

If you are thinking about becoming part of our team of 13,000 staff and volunteers, be sure to check out the “careers” section of the website.



## Canada's Smartest Kitchen

A 12,000 sq. ft. extension to The Culinary Institute of Canada in Charlottetown, PEI is now home to two of the most creative cooking facilities in the country: Canada's Smartest Kitchen and the Cavendish Culinary Creation Centre.

Canada's Smartest Kitchen is the research arm of The Culinary Institute of Canada, a division of Holland College. Food processing is one of Canada's largest industries, with Canadian consumers purchasing more than \$60-billion annually in processed food. Canada's Smartest Kitchen is designed to facilitate collaborative work between chefs, scientists and industry to cater to changing tastes and capitalize on this booming market. It is equipped with state-of-the-art culinary research and development equipment and a high-tech boardroom for online meetings with clients and potential clients.

The Cavendish Culinary Creation Centre, located on the lower level of the two-storey extension, is the research and development division of Cavendish Farms and includes a pilot production line and food processing equipment. It will be specifically focused on developing innovative food products for Cavendish Farms, currently the fourth largest processor of frozen potato products in North America.

The facility was cost shared by ACOA (\$1.2-million), the Province of PEI (\$1.2-million), Cavendish Farms (\$1-million) and Holland College (\$750,000).



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### Say It with Pictures

Give us video, make it smart and funny, and let us respond: that's the message from the Facebook generation on social media marketing.

Nadia Aly holds a Master's degree in digital media. If you can surprise her or make her laugh, you'll keep her attention. "I'd like to see more videos," she says. "I want them to be two-minute videos. It shows personality. You can get information across better. I don't have to sit and read something that you can probably portray in two minutes."

Forbes.com recently reported that one-third of Internet traffic is now taken up by video. It's a regular part of business for Ashley King (above right), partner and content director for Haligoniac.ca, which uses Internet video to cover local news. "With video, you have the chance to create a little bit of a story and an insight into another human being, and that's what I think is captivating," he says.

Users want to see a human story, and they want to respond to it as well, so you'd better have a response function to accompany that video, King and Aly agree. "Something I would say is really important is letting people interact and engage and voice their opinion," says Aly. "When you go to a static webpage and there's nowhere to leave a comment, you've blocked your customer or user from engaging with you." ~ By Shaina Luck



### Oysters Rockie Fella

Ted Boutilier (right) is pumped. He and his partners (Brian and Erskine Lewis) at Future Seafoods Inc. just launched "Oysters Rockie Fella" prepared at their plant in Salutation Cove, PEI. The idea was birthed last summer when Boutilier arranged one of his famous oyster parties in order to get product photos for the company's website. When he served Oysters Rockie Fella as part of the fare, the "oohs" and "ahhs" got him thinking this could be a hot market product—especially for folks who shy away from slurping raw oysters. Before the oysters disappeared, he had formulated a plan.

The PEI Food Technology Centre did a lot of the food science related to the project and research chefs from The Culinary Institute of Canada plied their magic too. (One juicy Malpeque oyster, several international cheeses, cracker crumbs, herbs, double-smoked bacon bits and a few secret ingredients.) As the product was fine-tuned, Boutilier found a company in Montreal to make half shell oyster-like replicas out of 100 per cent sugar cane. The same company sourced trays from Israel that would form-fit six of the biodegradable "shells."

It likely won't be long before "Oysters Rockie Fella" are featured in hotels, restaurants and airlines around the world. Will consumers be able to buy them? "I hope to have some in every fish market between here and Victoria!" says Boutilier. ~ By Sandra Phimney



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