

Study Reveals High ROI Rate

A study conducted by the Morneau Shepell research group found that every \$1 invested in an employee and family assistance program translates into a return on investment of \$8.70 through a combination of improved productivity at work and less time away from work.

The Return on Investment for Employee and Family Assistance Programs is the largest Canadian study to assess the impact of

employee and family assistance programs on employees and their productivity. It is based on data collected from 80,000 cases in Canada of Morneau Shepell's EFAP, the largest employee and family assistance program in the country.

"One of the most critical factors for business success is employee productivity: it impacts an organization's bottom line," said Paula Allen, Vice President of Research and Integrative Solutions at Morneau

Shepell. "The personal issues of employees impact their productivity and providing them with an EFAP can help to resolve those issues and protect their productivity."

The dollar value for return on investment was calculated using the average wage for each client's industry based on July 2013 Statistics Canada data and the case cost was standardized to the average. ■

Quick Ideas

Why Don't More Employees Use EAP?

It's an idea that has gone round and round and round for years: *Why don't more employees use EAP?* The following are some suggestions that Steve Albrecht, a former police officer and domestic violence investigator with the San Diego Police Department, presented in an online EAP NewsBrief.

❖ **They don't think it's confidential.** Employers need to continually educate employees about how EAP works, starting with the fact that it is absolutely confidential. Moreover, EAP providers also need to remind employees that no reports come back to the organization and that there is no external record of their use of the EAP.

❖ **They feel there is a stigma involved in seeking out for help.**

It also cannot be overstated that it's no sin to reach out for help when you're struggling. Reiterate the many ways that EAP can help, including: financial problems, marital issues, stress, ailing parents, grief, gambling problems, substance abuse, depression, and others. Each of these concerns can be addressed competently by EA professionals, who may have a list of resources where they can refer the employee as well.

❖ **They think they need permission from their boss or from HR.** Just as the use of EAP is confidential, there is no need for employees to tell anyone, ask permission, go through HR channels, or do anything other than call the EAP phone number and make an appointment. Many EAP providers are quite flexible. They will work with some employees at

their therapist offices; they will work with the employee over the phone if that's desired; or they can even meet the employee at the worksite.

❖ **They don't know it exists.** This one is the most puzzling, at least if the EAP has done an adequate job marketing its services. Is EAP mentioned in new-employee orientation sessions? Are there posters and brochures in break rooms? Forward-thinking EAP providers will come to the organization and lead lunchtime presentations to introduce themselves and offer help on a variety of topics.

Summary

Look in the mirror. Which of these areas could *you* be doing a better job at? ■

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE REPORT

supporting EAP professionals

18 years of service!

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Making EAP Relevant to the Facebook Generation

This is the Second in a Series on Technology & EAP

By Leah Szemborski

Who cares about social media, website hits, followers and such? Your EAP clients, that's who! Social media is a popularity contest, and the most active, strategic, users get the most followers and the best outcomes. "Outcomes" can be measured in a variety of ways: engaged users, "likes," time spent on website, "hits," marketing leads, and the ever-coveted search engine optimization (or SEO).

You may be thinking, "So what? That's for those modern companies. My EAP is sticking to

the core work. We aren't going to dabble in that technology stuff. That's not even "real" EAP work. Right? Wrong. There's a lot for EAPs to gain from social media – provided you play the game right.

The Facebook Generation

The Facebook Generation (also referred to as Generation F) are people growing up in the digital age where social media is their primary networking tool. People in this generation include Generation Z (people born 1990s-2000s), to some extent Generation Y (people born 1970s-1990s) and even Generation X (people born mid-1960s-1980s).

In any case, Generation F has a high level of online interaction through mediums such as Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Snapchat and other online networking tools. *Our clients are getting younger.* The employees we once served are retiring at a record pace and are being replaced by people who work, think and connect much differently. The generation of technology natives is upon us!

What does this mean for EAP? *It is likely that some clients will*

not access services unless they can first connect online. For some clients that might mean browsing a website to see what services are offered and who the providers are. Many clients don't want to call for an appointment, they'd much rather e-mail. According to one

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study, 80% of social network users prefer to connect to brands through Facebook. This is not just a small portion of our employee populations; companies are requiring their workforces to embrace technology. As families scatter across the country parents, children, grandchildren, and even grandparents are jumping on the social media wave to stay connected.

“Our clients are getting younger. The employees we once served are retiring at a record pace and are being replaced by people who work, think and connect much differently.”

Devise a Plan

Those are all really good reasons to go social, but before you jump on the bandwagon it’s important to create a plan. Some businesses just “dabble” in social media but they likely end up investing more time and resources than the payoff they receive. Only with clear goals and a well-thought out strategy, can a business successfully use websites, e-mail, and social media to enhance EAP services to a generation of people who expect nothing less.

First, it’s important to pick realistic goals and then be able to measure whether or not those goals are being met. One social networking goal is business-to-business marketing (or B2B). With this goal the strategy focuses more on engaging local businesses to

become interested in your EAP and the services you offer.

You might consider starting a LinkedIn account and connecting with HR managers and business owners in your area. Look for opportunities to expand your network and generate content about mental health, business, leadership, employee wellness, and any other topics that might engage top business decision-makers.

You might also design a Facebook page that attracts local employees who may petition their business owners to get an EAP. You may also employ a Twitter strategy that includes interactions with local business owners to understand the issues important to them, and add your voice to conversations happening in your EAP service areas. As you can see each platform is unique and tailored for a certain type of communication and a different audience. It’s important to generate the right kind of content to attract the right audience on the right platform.

B2B is one social networking strategy that may generate leads for EAP contracts, but some EAPs would rather use social networking as a tool to engage existing EAP clients in dialogue and services in a way that’s comfortable to them; therefore increasing both web-based and in-person utilization rates.

To reach this goal the strategy may focus more on what services your EAP offers, what tools your website has available, and information geared toward employees and family members about mental health, work stress, family conflict, etc.

Topics must be relevant, timely, and interesting in order to engage clients. Once a potential client has “met” you online (through effective posts or Tweets), they will feel less apprehensive about setting up an in-person appointment — not to

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mention the value that the client receives from the online education and tools. It’s a win-win!

Monitoring is Vital

It’s important to recognize that social networking accounts need to be actively monitored and maintained for several reasons:

❖ To ensure that confidentiality is being maintained, especially by

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On the Job

Why I Won’t Accept Your Linkedin Invitation

By Michael O’Donnell

I receive roughly five or six requests to connect with people on LinkedIn every day. I consider each and every request in the spirit I hope others will consider my requests to connect with them. I use to accept invitations only from those I know – or at least have met in person.

I abandoned that policy because I myself have requested to connect with people on LinkedIn that I do not know and have not met, because I think there is a basis for mutual interest. It only seems fair that I should thoughtfully consider requests from people whom I do not know (yet).

I review the profiles of each person who invites me to connect. I generally accept invitations that are authentic and relevant to my professional endeavors. However, I also reject invitations for the following reasons:

❖ **No picture or the picture is an icon or company logo.** I’m looking to connect with “real” people, not with people with no faces or inanimate objects. I value relationships with people, not with entities. If I want to follow your company, I will do so under the “Companies” section of LinkedIn. I cannot know you or trust you if I cannot see you. I need to put a face to a name.

❖ **An incomplete or sparse profile.** If you can’t take the time to list your work history, educational background, and other information that helps me learn who you really are and what you are all about, why do I need you in my network? If I don’t know anything about you, I certainly can’t do anything for you, nor you for me.

❖ **Few connections and no recommendations.** I am immediately suspicious of invitations from people who have few if any connections. Such a profile screams “SCAMMER.” If you are just starting your professional career, you should at least be connected with your fellow classmates and friends. If no former supervisor, colleague, teacher, or friend has recommended you, why should I?

❖ **Your invitation reads, “I’d like to add you to my professional network on LinkedIn.”** If you can’t take 2

minutes to write, “*Hey Mike, I know we don’t know each other, but I think we have some mutual interests (or connections) and I would value you in my network,*” then I won’t take 1 second to click “accept.”

❖ **You lied about how you know me.** If your LinkedIn invite says you are a former colleague, or classmate, or we have done business together...and we haven’t...well, that’s just a bad way to start a new relationship.

❖ **You just want to sell stuff.** Your connection invitation was preceded by an InMail, which was essentially a sales pitch for your company or its products or services. See the first bulleted point.

❖ **Your profile title says you are a “visionary” or you have 10,000+ connections,** which intimates that I must be a dolt, because I have no vision and so fewer connections than you, and obviously would love to be one of your groupies. Really? Please spare me the privilege of being in your network.

❖ **Be you. Be real.** One good connection is better than hundreds (or thousands) of random names. ■

Michael O’Donnell is the managing director at Thesis Ventures.

Quick Ideas

Traits of Outstanding Employees

- They excel at their work with enthusiasm.
- They sharpen their skills.
- They keep their word.
- They do more than is expected.
- They maintain a positive attitude.
- They work well with others.
- They are problem solvers.
- They work hard even when others aren’t watching. ■

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Soldier Becomes Mental Health Advocate

Stephane Grenier became addicted to the adrenalin of dangerous war zones and peace missions — Afghanistan, Cambodia, Kuwait and Haiti to name a few — anything was better than home. Civilians, he felt, couldn't relate to soldiers returning from war-torn areas with a combination of grief, stress, trauma and depression.

After struggling alone with undiagnosed post-traumatic stress disorder, Grenier transformed himself from a suicidal soldier to a champion for mental health. Before he left the army in 2012 following 29 years of service, he had already spent a decade developing peer support and education programs for the military.

Grenier then developed a federal accreditation program for corporate peer-based mental health, supported by the Mental Health Commission of Canada; he says he is obsessed about changing the current workplace approach.

He says the military is having problems because it lacks innovation in the field of mental health services. "When you're sick and not feeling well, if you're really lucky you'll see mental health professional once a week ... if not, maybe once a month. [But] what happens to patients between medical appointments? They don't live in their doctors' offices. Soldiers do not [commit] suicide when seeing their therapists ... it's on the streets, off bridges and hitting

pillars, when they are the most isolated. What have we done to stop the isolation that happens with mental illness? According to the literature, the lack of support is the biggest risk factor in predicting who will succumb to mental illness."

He says that 800 numbers are a fast-track to a mental health professional, and that's a good thing. "But we [need to] close the gap [between appointments]," he adds. This is why Grenier says that human interaction, the peer-to-peer model is so powerful. ■

Source: *Montreal Gazette*. **Editor's note:** Suggestions for this column should be directed to the editor, mike.jacquart@impacttrainingcenter.net.

clients and customers engaging with the site;

- ❖ To confirm that social networking goals are being met as demonstrated by analytics data; and

- ❖ To guarantee a quick response to any comments or questions from customers or clients (social media happens in real time; Generation F does not want to be kept waiting!)

Although interactive websites and social networking sites can increase and enhance EAP services, it does require a significant commitment of time and creativity to stay connected and provide frequent updates, articles, comments, pictures and content. At a minimum shoot for at least a few posts a week — but more is typically better when it comes to social networking.

Measuring Success

Once an EAP has developed goals and an online strategy, it's important to measure the success, or be able to determine what's *blocking* success. There are many tools available to make it easy to determine what's working, what's not working, and the makeup of your audience, such as gender, location, age, engagement level with content, etc.

Facebook automatically generates these statistics for each Facebook business page after the page has reached 30 likes. (Analytics data can be found on the "Insights" tab at the top of the page). For analytics on other social media sites try www.analytics.twitter.com or www.analytics.pinterest.com. These sites are free, easy to understand, and a great tool to help adjust your strategy to get the most from your social networks!

Optimizing Your Brand

Another perk of using social media is brand recognition and



Editor's Notebook

"The employees we once served are retiring at a record pace and are

being replaced by people who work, think and connect much differently," states Leah Szemborski, author of this month's *EAR* cover story.

This is why the subject of "Making EAP Relevant to the Facebook Generation" is becoming more and more critical all the time. Technology is increasingly hard-wired into how young people go about their daily lives.

Consider something as simple as ordering a pizza. A 50-something like myself would probably just pick up the phone and call the local pizza parlor. But as John Pompe pointed out in another article on technology last year, "young consumers default to the national chain that offers ordering via a mobile app."

What does this mean to your EAP? It might make all the difference between a young person utilizing your EAP if you offer an app — more on behavioral health apps in next month's *EAR* — versus passing you by if they have to look you up in the Yellow Pages.

As well as having an app, *social networking* is another important aspect of technology for EAP to consider. Rather than diving in blindly, Leah stresses developing a social media *plan*. She correctly adds that social networking isn't for all EAPs. Still, it seems clear that all EAPs DO have to engage in *some sort* of technology in their practice. Those who don't run the risk of being irrelevant to Generation F.

Mike Jacquart

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ACA Boosting Addiction Rehab Field

Investors are pouring money into the operators of rehab centers as many more Americans are receiving health care coverage for addiction treatment, which in turn is driving up valuations and triggering a consolidation of businesses in the fragmented sector.

Under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), new health plans must cover ten core health benefit areas. This includes substance abuse and mental health disorders, opening up services such as alcohol and drug detox or addiction therapy to many Americans who previously couldn't afford them.

The healthcare law also allows young adults to stay on their parents' insurance plans until age 26. This offers coverage to many young people struggling with drug abuse and eating disorders.

And the economic recovery has helped as well, as it means more people can afford to pay the expenses that the plans won't cover.

There are now a growing number of major investors, led by private equity firms and healthcare companies, seeking to take advantage of a market for addiction services that experts say has grown to

\$35 billion a year today from \$21 billion in 2003.

Prices for rehab businesses are climbing so high that some of those who bought assets in the previous decade are taking their profits and selling to a new wave of investors betting on the sector on expectations of continued strong growth.

No one knows the end result, but for now, the ACA (e.g. Obamacare) is helping private investors get their "rehab clinic fix." ■

Source: Reuters.

search engine optimization, or SEO. What is SEO? For instance, if you do a Google search for EAPs in your area, does your company show up in the search results? What is the rank? Remember that social networking is a popularity contest. The more a business uses social media, the more engaged their users are, the more hits they get on their website, and the higher they will rank in search engine results!

Not to mention, an online presence puts your brand out there for people to see — and keep seeing! If a company is browsing for an EAP and your company pops up at the top of the list and it comes with a brand they recognize, this

may be the difference between getting a contract or not.

Summary

Only you can determine if using social media is right for your EAP. If you decide that you don't have the time, energy or resources to spend on social media, that's ok! Be honest with yourself and the capabilities of your team. Be thoughtful about the venues you choose to participate in. There are many ways to build business and promote EAP services without using social media. But if you think you are ready to get social, jump in and have fun! ■

Leah Szemborski is an EAP counselor in Central Wisconsin. **NEXT MONTH:** Evaluating the leading behavioral health apps.

Is Employer-Sponsored Health Care a Thing of the Past? – Part II

By Paul Zane Pilzer and Rick Lindquist

Both employers and employees alike have tried to make the most of a bad situation. Facing double-digit growth in health insurance premiums, companies have either eliminated health benefits or redesigned the plans to include higher deductibles, larger co-payments, and greater premium sharing by employees.

Picking up where part one of this article left off, this month's article examines the steps that employees should take.

❖ Ask your employer to cancel your insurance. For decades, Americans have relied on and been grateful for the health insurance coverage we received through our employers. But guess what? Times have changed, the Affordable Care Act is here, and the outdated group plan we've been desperately clutching with both hands is not as great as we think it is.

In fact, most would be far better off asking their employer to kick this inefficient (and far too expensive) dinosaur to the curb. There are many downsides to employer-provided health insurance. It's overpriced, unreliable — you can lose your coverage if you're sick and unable to work — and limits you to a certain group of medical providers and facilities, just to name a few.

We recommend switching to defined contribution health benefits. Basically, employees purchase their own individual policies on the open market (a purchase frequently offset by government subsidies), and employers give them the money.

These defined contribution solutions save businesses and their employees 20 to 60% on health insurance costs annually. They're better for everyone — group plans just don't make sense anymore. Consumers can migrate from employer-provided group policies to employer-funded individual plans at a total cost that is 20 to 60% lower for the same coverage. That's \$4,000 to \$12,000 in savings per year for a family of four for the same hospitals, same doctors, and same prescriptions.

❖ Research and calculate the most cost-effective plan for you and your family. When you're evaluating the cost of a health insurance policy, you should consider your premium amount (the amount you will pay to the insurance company for your plan, usually monthly) and "out-of-pocket" costs (the amount you will pay when you receive medical care), such as deductibles, co-payments, co-insurance, etc.

In order to save money, it is important to select the right metallic tier for your health and financial needs. If you have a family and anticipate using a lot of medical services, it is more ideal to select a platinum or gold plan. Although the premium is higher, you will pay less out-of-pocket when it comes time to receive medical care.

If you are a healthy individual and do not anticipate having a lot of healthcare needs, selecting a silver or bronze plan is more ideal to save money. Although there will be higher out-of-pocket costs when you do need medical services, you will pay a significantly lower premium. ■

Paul Zane Pilzer is a best-selling author, former professor at NYU, and an economist in two White House administrations. Rick Lindquist is president of Zane Benefits, Inc., a leader in individual health insurance reimbursement for small businesses. Editor's note: These views are of the authors of this article only, and do not reflect an endorsement on the part of the editor or that of "Employee Assistance Report."

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Setting Workplace Boundaries

❖ Being Facebook friends with a boss doesn't make you best buddies, so keep your profile work-friendly. It's natural to feel close to a boss when you see personal photos and status updates. But that doesn't mean an employee should express his/her "wild side" online. A photo of swilling beer doesn't help one's professional image, and the boss

may wonder if you're coming into the office hung over. Adjust the page's privacy settings so that certain posts and pictures are off-limits to co-workers. Or better yet: don't post them at all.

❖ Never swap soap opera stories. Even if the boss spills details about the wild bachelor party he just attended, that's not an invite

for employees to spill *their* outrageous stories. Here's a good rule of thumb: tell *half* as many personal stories as your boss. If he shares something personal twice a week, you do so *once* a week. And *never* share anything that belongs on a reality show. ■

Source: John Tesh: Intelligence for Your Life (www.tesh.com).

The Most Desired Skills of the Future – Part I

By Nathan Jamail

How many parents have a toddler that can work an iPhone or iPad better than they can? What about the parents of teenage kids or young adults that cannot communicate except through texting, email or social media? With technology constantly evolving, technical skills and know-how will be the most common skills among the working and business public — but the ability to communicate face to face will always be one of the most important aspects of business.

While younger generations preparing to enter the workforce should keep up with technology to remain relevant in today's economy, they should also continue to practice and focus on perfecting their soft skills. These include communication, interpersonal interaction, influence and personal

effectiveness. These abilities are the great *differentiator* in business of the future.

In order to develop these relevant skills and to create the best team today and in the future, there are three things a leader can do.

In the first part of this series, we will examine how to be a coach to your players; this, most likely, is *not* what your manager did for you. In part two we will identify *what* you want to coach; and then we'll take a look at *how to implement* a program that requires the leader to participate.

Learn to coach

The word "coaching" is used in business today as much as the word "culture", but in the same way that "culture" is used in most organizations, it is merely a word with very little impact or "law". Leaders tell their managers to coach, but they never teach them how to coach.

Many managers may say, "Hire good people and then just let them do their jobs." This strategy will suffice if a leader is content with never making their employees better.

In professional sports a coach drafts the best player they can find and they commit everyday of their professional life to making them better. In business it is the leader's job to hire great people and make them *better*. The key to start coaching is to change the mindset from managing to coaching.

To accomplish this, the leader's actions must change from a reactive approach — of getting involved when needed — to a proactive approach of getting involved *before* they are needed in order to prepare the employee to *win*. ■

Nathan Jamail is the president of the Jamail Development Group, and author of the best-selling "Playbook" series. For more information, visit www.NathanJamail.com.