

*Stephanie Neuvirth is chief human resources and diversity officer for City of Hope, a 6,000-person comprehensive cancer institute. It is one of 41 in the nation and provides a range of services, including clinical care, research, and education. It is located near Los Angeles, California. Some of the most important drugs related to diabetes and cancer have been developed at City of Hope, including the discovery of synthetic insulin.*

#### **What are the biggest challenges facing City of Hope (COH)?**

We're facing significant changes: healthcare reform, shifts in our payer mix, reduced grant funding, managed care insurance pressures, new competitors, and industry consolidation.

#### **What about the internal, organizational challenges?**

COH is celebrating its 100th anniversary. Looking ahead, we need to redesign how we work and continue our journey toward developing a high-performance leadership culture: one focused on engagement, accountability, working cooperatively to achieve results, and building talent that is change agile. Traditionally, we have been acquirers of talent; now, we must build it.

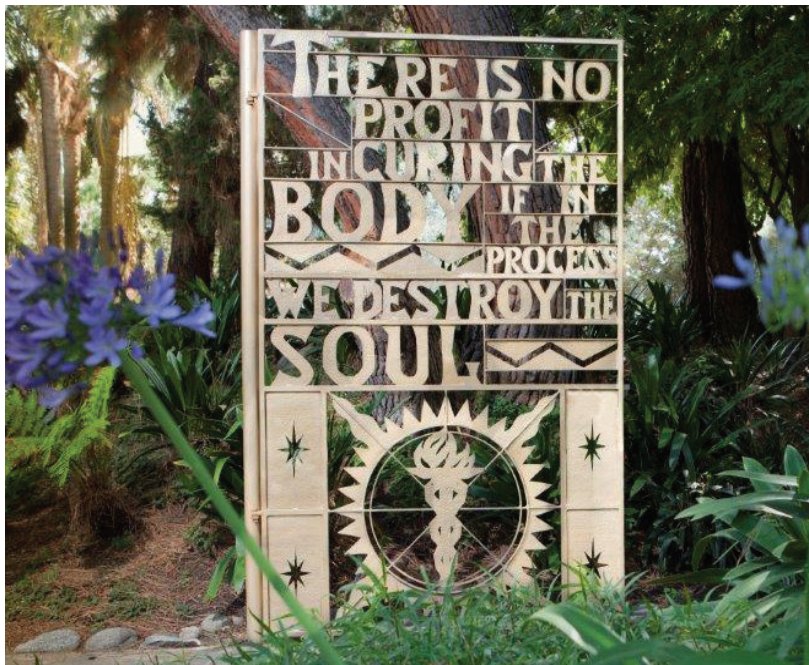
#### **Given these challenges, how is your role evolving?**

I've been at COH for the past two-and-a-half years. In the past, HR was about administrative processing. When I was being recruited, leadership was clear that it wanted to reinvent HR to make it an agent for transformation and change and to have it become a strategic contributor to the organization. The HR role has dramatically changed from a function devoted to benefits administration and onboarding to one that is a true strategic partner and driver of change transformation.

In this issue, Stephanie Neuvirth discusses how an "integrated approach" to organization development and "story busting" transformed City of Hope. Should you forgive and forget? Howard M. Guttman sets the ground rules. And Pete Elder tells how a siloed, parochial finance team became a powerful, global-minded powerhouse. All this in a five-minute read.

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### Stephanie Neuvirth, City of Hope

#### What is it that you typically do as a strategist and an agent of transformation?

Take today. We recently completed a Gallup engagement survey, and I just came from a meeting to discuss helping managers and leaders understand the Gallup engagement feedback. Following this meeting, I'll be meeting with a vendor to develop a video to redefine service excellence at COH. We've just refreshed our mission and values and are now creating tools to help our community of 6,000 associates gain clarity around them. Later in the day, I'll be working to develop new talent scorecards and measures, as well as operational scorecards to help managers more effectively manage the human capital side of the organization, including associated costs.

#### How do you move the COH organizational mountain?

One key is to change the ongoing conversation, evolving the dialogue from the what and how to the what, how, and why: explaining to our people why we have to do things differently and what the benefits for doing so will be. Role-modeling, listening to people, and helping them overcome the trust issues and inherent fear of change are all essential. We have a variety of meetings, such as "leadership cascades" – attended by anyone who manages people – and "City Forms," or town hall meetings. We use Web- and paper-based tools and talking points to ensure that consistent messages are cascaded down through the organization. At the leadership level, we also have enterprise-wide measures that keep senior managers focused on strategic priorities. We all must continue to raise the performance bar in order to achieve institutional success.

#### What has been the COH's experience in building horizontal, high-performing teams?

The horizontal, high-performing approach has penetrated many areas of COH. We worked to align the operations team, which is

the largest team in our organization, along with the Supportive Care group and the HR function. The executive team has also been exposed to high-performing-team concepts. It is important that we continue to focus on what a high performing team looks like and how to act as one.

#### What were the issues within HR that led you to adopt the model?

About a year-and-a-half ago, we faced a number of issues that called out for a new approach—the biggest of which was a need to drive horizontal performance. Most healthcare organizations are hierarchical, command and control, and top-down driven. To achieve our strategy, we needed to be more collaborative, faster, and more client centric - internally as well as externally. HR did not have generalists, only specialists, such as comp and benefits, talent acquisition, and organization development. Everyone focused on his or her area of specialization and didn't collaborate across disciplines. We weren't servicing clients as one HR team.

#### Were there other issues that prompted you to move to the high-performance model?

Yes, we lacked clarity on shared goals; there was confusion about who did what; and there was poor communication resulting in a lot of dropped balls. Sixty-two percent of the HR team is new. Not only did we have to get our people up to speed on COH and healthcare, but we also had to do some "story busting." When you bring on new people, often from other industries, they invariably come with assumptions about how work gets done. We also needed a common performance philosophy and a common framework for making decisions and getting work done. The alignment process helped us to achieve this rapidly.

### **How did the horizontal, high-performance model facilitate working more interdependently?**

The high-performance model provided a common language and approach to addressing issues and a way of working collaboratively. It helped to minimize the dependency on the leader of each HR function, who previously had been solely responsible for working cross-functionally to resolve issues. It helped us build a community of high performers.

### **How did you approach implementing the high-performance model?**

We used an integrated approach to changing management. We went through a series of intense alignment sessions, first with the senior HR team, then function to function and level to level. We even aligned specific teams, such as our Organization Development Team, which is relatively new. In addition, a number of senior team members are being individually coached, and we transferred key skills needed to operate horizontally, such as those related to influencing and managing conflict. It was a powerful way to accelerate change.

### **What was the advantage of using an integrated approach?**

The high-performance approach represents a different language and way of working. Repetition is the motor skill of learning, which underscores the need to use a variety of approaches to reinforce behavior change. The alignment sessions changed behavior, but you also have to change mind-sets and skill sets, which is why we also focused on coaching and skills transfer. Without all three, change will not stick. HPT provided a common language, a way of addressing issues, and a way of working collaboratively.

### **If I were to visit your senior HR team, how would I sense that it has changed?**

One thing you'd notice right away is clarity around decision making, along with greater efficiency and speed. You won't see hurt feelings, because team members have agreed to assume positive intent and follow the ground rule that only the essential few should be involved in decision making. You would also hear an aligned vocabulary. When we used terms such as "triangulation" or "story busting," you would notice everyone understanding what is being discussed.

### **What are the most important lessons you learned from undertaking the move to a horizontal, high-performance organization?**

I learned three core lessons: Aligning people creates engagement and empowerment; trust the process; and the time is well worth the investment. ●



## To Let It Go or Not to Let It Go? That Is the Question.

by Howard M. Guttman

Over the years, a steady stream of wisdom has been dispensed about how to deal with some past slight: forgive and forget; let bygones be bygones; forget the past; bury the hatchet; and many more. The benefits of forgiving and forgetting are said to be many and a sign of strength. Most commentators on the subject believe that forgiveness provides benefits for forgivers, including freeing them from being imprisoned by protracted anger. Oscar Wilde only half jokingly commented that forgiveness can be a kind of “gotcha” to an enemy. As he put it, “Always forgive your enemies—nothing annoys them more.” And Gandhi believed that “forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.”

Within an organizational setting, the issue of when to forgive and forget—or, as I prefer, the less emotionally loaded phrase “when to let it go or not let it go”—can be a very serious one, with its impact beyond just the bruised feelings of two individuals. It can kick up toxic dust that envelops a team and an organization.

A while ago, we were working with a consumer company in which two executives were continually duking it out. Years earlier, the head of Sales believed that the head of Marketing hadn’t kept her word on a budget agreement, while the marketer felt that her sales counterpart was a serial backstabber. People on the senior team picked sides and became willing spectators at the blood sport in which the two combatants engaged during meetings. Not surprisingly, the dysfunctional model at the top led those below to accept little accountability for handling their own breakdowns. Underground behavior prevailed, along with silo thinking. This sapped the organization of its vitality, as it devoted more energy to maintaining internal strife than to winning in the marketplace.

Compare this situation to one in which I facilitated an alignment session for the senior team of a recently merged company, the members of which came from two companies that were formerly fierce competitors.

The data collected in preparation for the alignment session showed a deep lack of trust among the senior players. I asked the CEO how long he would allow the situation on his team to continue. His response was unequivocal: “I told them to take as long as they needed – provided they got over it by the end of the day! I’m not paying them to look at trust as an option; I’m paying them to trust one another.”

In high-performance environments managing conflict is not an option—it’s a must.

### *The Conflict Management Imperative*

There will always be breakdowns on teams and in organizations. *But in high-performance environments managing conflict is not an option—it’s a must.* You are paid to trust one another, presume good intent, own your behavior, and “get it flat” with colleagues. This becomes an imperative within a high-performance environment, given the focus on working interdependently and horizontally. Otherwise, the model cannot work. If you are working in a high-performance environment and there is a breach of

trust, it’s up to the offended party to convey to the offender what trust would look like and what evidence needs to be in place to warrant a change in “story.” Assuming that whoever is at fault “owns it,” you then mutually agree to recontract the relationship and take next steps. It’s basic conflict management.

The values that are baked into a high-performance culture—transparency, confronting issues head-on and on time, and accountability—support effective conflict management and trust building. If you’re playing on a high-performing team and there is a breakdown between two of its members, the team holds them accountable to “get it flat.” Such values, in turn, are reinforced by a high-performance social script that lays out protocols for dealing with how issues get resolved, when to escalate an unresolved issue, triangulation, time limits for issue resolution, and the like. Parties to a conflict need not feel that they have to go it alone. The high-performance context offers great support and guidance.

Forgiveness is about letting go of resentment and thoughts of revenge. You forego the "he said, she said" psychodrama. It is a deeply personal decision, even in high-performance environments. You can't legislate values, and only you can decide how you will handle a contentious situation: You can choose to:

- *Play the victim*—Say nothing, act hurt and powerless, and complain to others.
- *Leave*—Physically remove yourself from involvement with the person.
- *Change yourself*—Move off your position, shift your view of the other party, or let it go.
- *Confront*—Address the issue openly, candidly, and objectively; communicate with the other party.

In a high-performance environment, playing victim is not an option. That strategy creates a hotbed for underground behavior. The latter two alternatives are the hallmarks of high-performance players. They entail committing to a process of change and being at stake for the enterprise. Leaving is a respectable alternative when you choose not to trust.

The next time you're confronted with a forgiving and forgetting situation, consider these questions:

- What's the price of not letting it go, and what's the payoff for me if I do?
- What role did I play in creating the situation?
- What behavior does the other person need to change, and is he or she coachable?
- Is the nature of the transgression significant enough that I chose to walk away from the relationship?
- What's best for the enterprise?

As you reflect on these questions, follow the protocols of high-performance conflict management. And remember: On a high-performing team you get paid to let it go and trust. 🌍

## What's New?

### Guttman Certified as a Woman-Owned Business

Guttman Development Strategies is now a woman-owned business, certified by the National Women's Business Owners Corporation ("NWBOC"), which provides corporations with the ability to improve their procurement practices. The shift will support our clients' efforts to meet diversity requirements. Jackie Guttman and Howard M. Guttman continue to serve respectively as the firm's CEO and principal.

For additional information, please contact Jackie Guttman ([jguttman@guttmandev.com](mailto:jguttman@guttmandev.com) or 973-770-7177)

### Speaker's Corner

Howard M. Guttman  
"Redefining the Fundamentals of Leadership: Creating Great Business Teams"  
HR.com Webinar  
April 2, 2014  
12:00-1:00 p.m.  
To register, [click here](#).

Howard M. Guttman/Brian McNamara, Novartis  
"Turnaround at Novartis OTC: Building a High-Performance Culture"  
New Jersey OD Learning Community  
April 3, 2014  
8:30-11:00 a.m.  
Parsippany, NJ

Howard M. Guttman/Roy Benin, Mars Chocolate  
"Building a High-Performance Brand Inside Mars Chocolate, North America"  
NYC ASTD  
April 22, 2014  
Venue TBD

Howard M. Guttman  
Keynote Address: HR's Role in Building Great Business Teams  
Philadelphia Leadership Summit  
May 6, 2014  
6:00 p.m.  
Ritz-Carlton Hotel, Philadelphia, PA

### Recent Articles

Howard M. Guttman  
"Building Horizontal, High-Performance Global Teams"  
MWorld  
Fall 2013

This article features the impressive results that Todd Lachman and his team at Mars, Inc.'s Petcare business have achieved. The lessons they learned along the way can be applied by global teams everywhere.



## From a Consultant's Notebook

Pete Elder

*Here are field notes from an intervention led by Guttman Associate Senior Consultant Pete Elder.*

### Presenting Situation

The leadership team of a finance function of a global consumer goods company wasn't playing as a team...Worked independently of one another; ambivalent about need to work together as a team; siloed; not seen by rest of organization as powerful business partners; and lacked a global perspective... Team members and leaders of local business units generated local strategies, along with business processes, leading to inefficiencies and inconsistencies in managing finances across the regions... Tacit collusion with regional leaders to stay regional and not operate globally... Change required... The finance leadership team needed to be more cohesive, take up its game, and operate from a broader global mind-set.

### Charter for Guttman

The initial charter was loosely defined by the outgoing leader, who initially simply wanted to do some teambuilding... New leader brought sharper thinking... Wanted team to operate like a leadership team: work interdependently, collaboratively, with a broader global mind-set... Also wanted his team to be seen as value-added business partners by the executives in the businesses it served.

### Process

Team had to first clarify what it meant to operate as a value-added, global finance leadership team... Charter crafted in terms of mission/scope, roles, how team members interacted with one another, and how talent was managed across the global finance function. One plank in the charter: "We want to become global business partners with regional business leaders within the various businesses..." Team-alignment sessions held to refine and internalize the vision, define the mind-set change that needed to occur, and establish ways of working together as a high-performing team. ... Holding up a mirror to the group and a "story exchange" exercise enabled team members to see that what made the team successful in the past wasn't enough to ensure future success... Real-time coaching and skills transfer reinforced the mission.

### Results

Impressive team turnaround... Team members no longer saw their global role as an event or "hat" they wore when attending quarterly meetings... Day-to-day actions now taken as global finance leaders... They let go of old "either/or" stories—serve either the needs of the region or global needs—and replaced them with an "and story"—it was beneficial to both assume a global perspective and support the regions. No longer saw themselves as message carriers from the team leader to the regions, but as business partners, with points of view and recommendations... Issues in team meetings discussed from global perspective, with everyone participating, rather than tuning in only when a team member's region was being discussed... Shift from, "I won't step in your stuff, if you don't step in mine" to "It's all our stuff." New team buzzword: "Bold," as in, "Are we being bold?"

### Key Insights

Don't underestimate a team's potential... Trust the competence that may be dormant and waiting to express itself... Having a leader who is a partner in the intervention, rather than a few steps behind the consultant, speeds up the change process; think globally and act locally. 🌐