

Career Management: Taking Care of Business™

Making the business case for incorporating career management practice and methods into corporate strategies, in support of human resource development.

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Executive Summary

What is your organization doing to protect and grow your knowledge assets?

“In today’s knowledge economy, the calibre of a company’s talent increasingly determines success in the marketplace”¹.

Written in 1996, these words are more urgent today than they were then. In an increasingly unforgiving business environment, with unrelenting change now the norm, the need for talented, effective and engaged people has never been greater.

Yet the pace of change - whether the result of globalization, technology, rapidly shifting demographics or all these factors - is overwhelming many organizations as they attempt to address this challenge. Organizations are looking for new approaches to managing their knowledge assets and reducing the many stresses on the people in which those assets reside.

According to a recent poll of employers², the top five human resource issues for companies are:

- Performance Management
- Leadership Development
- Career and Succession Planning
- Change Management
- Talent Retention

¹ *The War for Talent, McKinsey and Company, Inc., Organization and Leadership Practice, April 2001*

² *HR.com newsletter Oct. 2004, poll of delegates to 3rd Annual Conference*



Clearly, such concerns predominate because companies recognize the urgency of harnessing the people power within their organizations, and are actively working on it. It's all about having the talent to create and maintain competitive advantage.

A study of 200 companies by Watson Wyatt, a HR consulting firm, suggests that, despite these increasing investments in people strategies, most companies may be waging an uphill struggle on the employee retention and knowledge-asset management fronts. Watson Wyatt found that only 49% of employees in Canada were committed to remaining with their employer. This is a significant decline from 62% nine years earlier³. More alarming, however, is the Gallup Organization found that 70% of employed Canadians are not engaged by the work they are doing.

If 51% of employees are thinking of leaving and 70% are disengaged from their work, how does this impact the productivity and performance in an organization? How does that get organizations closer to building competitive advantage through people?

An emerging discipline that has shown success in addressing those key “people power” issues is **Career Management**. Career Management seeks to improve productivity in a transformed workplace where career ladders and mutual loyalty between employee and organization are fast disappearing.

Career Management helps organizations and people adjust to these new realities by:

- systematically cultivating a **culture of engagement** and “response ability” in the organization, and at the same time

³ Izzo, J & Withers, P. (2000) *Values Shift: the new work ethic & what it means for business*. Prentice Hall



- providing tools and processes that enable employees to become career resilient and essentially responsible for their own **career management**.

Career Management has been called “The Third Discipline” in view of its role as a partner to the people strategies provided by Human Resource Management (HRM) and Organizational Development & Learning (ODL).

Career Management finds its role as a provider of solutions primarily **at the level of the individual employee**. By equipping employees to thrive in the new fluid “non-committed” workplace, it helps equip organizations to harness its people power for competitive advantage.

How does a contemporary approach to Career Management make economic sense? This document addresses all this and other questions.

The business case for career management’s solutions is straightforward: strong organizations able to thrive in the face of myriad economic and social pressures can only be created by **strong individuals connected to their work**. The Third Discipline - Career Management - anchors and enhances the work of HRM and ODL by enabling employees to be resilient in the new workplace.

This White Paper was developed to support businesses wanting to identify ways to proactively address both the uncertainty and opportunities of today and tomorrow. It promotes an understanding of how Career Management fits into corporate strategies, and brings increased clarity to emerging workplace issues that affect employers, employees and their redefined relationship. It articulates how Career Management, as The Third Discipline, is an increasingly indispensable part of the overall workplace people solution in the 21st century.



In addition to this white paper the authors are writing practical position papers on Performance Management, Leadership Development, Career and Succession Planning, Change Management and Talent Retention.

Consultation and advice is available from the authors and can be arranged by contacting the Career Management Association of BC at 604.319.3977 or through info@bccma.ca.



The Third Discipline: Career Management

The familiar story of the Chinese symbol that stands for both “problem” and “opportunity” aptly illustrates the people challenges of the typical contemporary organization.

The **problem**? How to successfully respond to new realities such as:

- a disappearing career ladder in flattened and highly cost conscious organizations;
- business goals and structures in states of constant flux;
- constantly changing requirements for skill sets; and
- the diminished commitment between employers and employees that has resulted from these conditions.

The **opportunity** is that by solving the problem - by successfully adapting to these new workplace features - an organization can in the process create a strong and tenable competitive advantage. If an organization and its employees can learn to, in effect, embrace these new conditions rather than function in spite of them, the rewards could be substantial.

“Competitiveness in today’s economy depends on leveraging knowledge assets.”⁴ Or, as Phil Jarvis, Vice President, Partnership Development, National Life/Work Centre, has pointedly said, we need a new mindset about working:

“Canada is on the verge of a workforce crisis from which, paradoxically, it could emerge with citizens enjoying a higher standard of living, and governments and corporations enjoying

⁴ Stevens, P. p. 2



both increased revenues and reduced expenditures. Needed is a career management paradigm shift to help citizens navigate the new work environment. The industrial age vocational guidance mindset that still prevails simply isn't working for too many people, and the costs in both financial and human terms are intolerable⁵.

Coping with new paradigms in business is nothing new. In the quest for competitive advantage, companies work diligently to find the right "fixes" in every area of their operations as marketplaces change around them. Products and services, financial structures, every process, every system, every market interaction - all are diligently and continuously dissected, analyzed, worried over and subjected to strategies for improvement and change.

Similarly, employee initiatives - or "people fixes" - include significant investments in remuneration and a sophisticated array of tangible and intangible incentives of various kinds, and training and organizational development. These initiatives are, of course, fundamental to good business operations, but are they effective enough to make a difference to the engagement level of the individual employee? The authors' findings and practical experience suggest not; if the effectiveness were there would only 49% of employees be committed to their employer⁶?

Too often these elaborate and costly efforts, as a whole, fail to deliver fully on their promise, simply because a surprisingly large percentage of Canadian employees are not genuinely engaged in their work.

⁵ Phil Jarvis, 2004, Vice-President, Partnership Development, National Life/Work Center

⁶ Izzo, J & Withers, P. (2000) *Values Shift: the new work ethic & what it means for business*. Prentice Hall



The Changing Workplace

Let us examine the engagement issue in more detail.

The Gallup Organization⁷ says that **70% of employees** are disengaged from the work they do. “Disengaged” is defined as emotionally disconnected from and uncommitted to their work. In even plainer language, **they are not very interested in what they are doing**. Are they doing their best work with this mindset? Is this the environment in which competitive advantage can be created or sustained?

Why are so many companies struggling to create and maintain an engaged workforce?

This finding of “lack of engagement” is where new approaches to Career Management begin: by creating the conditions that enable individuals to be connected to their work. (And, let us remember, “their work” is the advancement of your organization’s objectives, day by day, and over time.)

Companies are struggling more with this engagement deficit because as the nature of work changed, so have the characteristics of the workforce. In recent years, organizations have been buffeted by numerous business and social dynamics that, as a whole, are challenging traditional ideas about work from both the employee and the employer perspective. Looking towards the future, the need and the urgency to act will increase.

⁷ C. Coffman and G. Gonzalez-Molina. (2002) *Follow this Path: how the world's greatest organizations drive growth by unleashing human potential*. The Gallup Organization



Demographic Changes


Organizations must cope with a rapidly changing workforce composition including numerous factors, such as⁸:

- **Labour market supply.** The birth rate is below replacement level; Canada's population is ageing. An ageing workforce means massive retirements are imminent with insufficient numbers of people to replace these workers or their knowledge. This means more and more intense competition for the best human resources - not just in Canada, but globally.
- **Labour market participation.** The labour market will decline for men and rise for women. Women tend to bring different values to their careers, and higher expectations from their work that companies need to address if they wish to ensure their workforce is engaged.
- **Immigration.** Skilled immigrant workers will be needed to fill the skills gaps we will see in the future. New cultures will bring different attitudes and needs about work and career to a company.
- **Work/life Balance.** Changes in the family, the economy and society, and technology have forced people to re-look at work and how it integrates with their lives outside of work.

Work relationships and attitudes have changed.

We can all appreciate that the technology-based knowledge economy has forever altered the way people work.

⁸ O'Reilly, E. *Making Career Sense of Labour Market Information* (2001)



New labour market entrants can expect to experience a **succession of jobs**, possibly in a number of industry sectors, during their working lives. They may also have access to more opportunities than ever before⁹.

Positions no longer offer security and permanence¹⁰. As middle managements have been downsized, right-sized and out-sized the career ladder barely exists. Career ladders and job titles are being replaced by options to develop competencies in planned moves and opportunities for changes in work roles and teams. These moves might be lateral or vertical, or accommodate a wish to downshift¹¹.

Not surprisingly, **people's expectations of work have also changed**. Many employees now want their work and their jobs to have meaning to them, in large part because they spend so many hours at it. Job satisfaction is no longer all about salary, benefits, and perks. It is also about answering the question, "How can I contribute and be fulfilled in my work?"

In most organizations that have become de-layered, the "next steps" are unclear for most employees¹². Employees need to better understand how to look out for themselves in this kind of scenario. Employers are equally unclear on how to address these uncertainties. Each is hoping the other will "figure it out". In the Third Discipline, Career Management is about helping employees "figure it out" by seeing their value and career development differently.

⁹ *IBID*

¹⁰ *Betcherman & Chaykowski, 1996; Foot, 1996; Izzo & Withers, 2000; Lipsett & Reesor, 1997; Pulley, 1997; Waterman & Waterman, Jr., 1994)*

¹¹ *Jones, S. (2002) Fostering Resilience and Self-Reliance in a Contingent Workforce*

¹² *Izzo, J & Withers, P. (2000) Values Shift: the new work ethic & what it means for business, Prentice Hall Canada*



Traditionally and most often in large organizations, two disciplines have supported organizations as they attempt to “figure it out”: Human Resources Management (HRM) and Organizational Development and Learning (ODL). Career Management serves a vital linkage between organization goals and objectives, human resources practices and policies, and the career goals of an individual.

Career Management enables employees to express their personal goals in terms that relate to an organization’s objective, and helps to create the conditions whereby employees can be fully engaged in the work of the organization. Career Management processes enable both employers and employees to develop opportunities outside traditional career laddering to fulfill the basic human need to achieve, learn and grow, and the corporate need to make a profit in highly competitive markets.

Career Management is directly concerned with productivity and performance.

A well conceived Career Management strategy is not chiefly about making people feel good; it is not a perk of the job. Career Management programs have in the past been viewed by some as “touchy-feely” or too vague in their impacts, more about helping the employee than helping the company¹³.

That has changed. The discipline’s name may be the same but today’s Career Management practitioners bring a new attitude, and a new set of solutions. Gone are the vocational guidance models that influenced so many of today’s employees and employers: models that no longer apply to huge numbers of employers. Now, Career Management practitioners

¹³ Stevens, P. (2003)



must insist that career management strategies be hardwired to business objectives.

Offering Career Management programs that go beyond traditional skills, interests and personality assessments, and are linked to business objectives and strategies, will create a more engaged and committed workforce, a workforce enthusiastic about coming to work every day, a workforce constantly looking for new ways to improve the business. Aligning an individual employee's needs and interests with the corporation's objectives results in higher motivation, increased loyalty, and an employee's enhanced willingness to continuously update skills and knowledge.

While "happier people" is obviously an outcome of career management, the value of a program must be measured by the degree to which it is contributing to an organization's performance. "Career management is ... working within a strategic human capital context"¹⁴.

If 51% of employees are thinking of leaving and 70% are disengaged, how can you maintain competitive advantage?

Engagement and self-reliance for career is ultimately about increasing productivity. In a study of 200 companies by Watson Wyatt, a HR consulting firm, only 49% of employees were committed to remaining with their employer. This is a significant decline from 62% nine years earlier¹⁵. If 51% of employees are thinking of leaving and 70% are disengaged, how can an organization maintain competitive advantage? And how does this impact productivity and performance?

¹⁴ Stevens, P. p. 5 (2003)

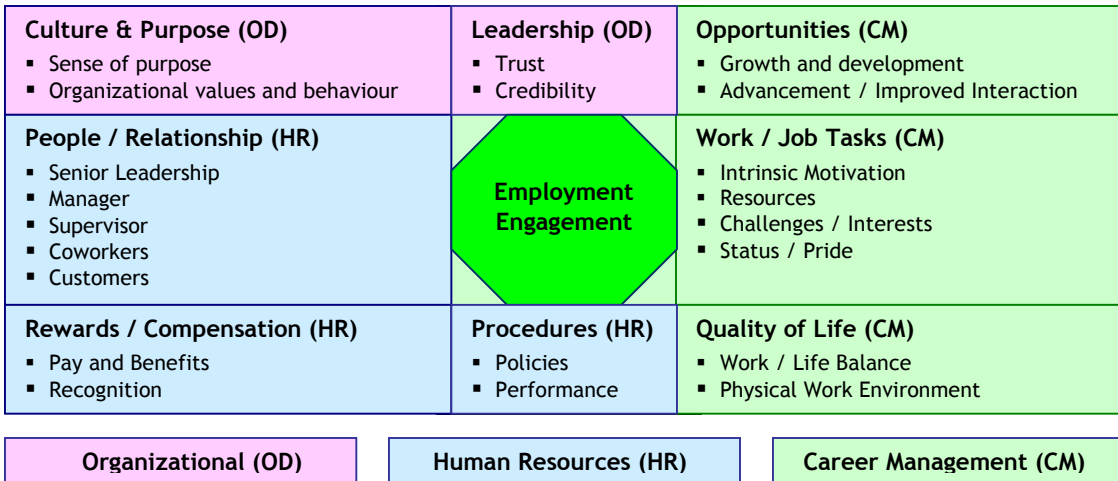
¹⁵ Izzo, J & Withers, P. (2000) *Values Shift: the new work ethic & what it means for business*. Prentice Hall



Engaging people in their work, and thereby capturing the kind of “people value” that will promote competitively superior performance, will not just happen by offering extrinsic inducements such as increasing pay, benefits, incentives, or offering flex time. Rather, it improves by addressing the intrinsic motivating factors¹⁶. And the productivity benefits of Career Management go beyond employees at senior levels. Providing career management assistance to employees at all levels of the organization makes sense, because it recognizes that it may be as difficult to replace a gifted customer service employee, who moves into a supervisory position, as it is to replace the CFO.

The Third Discipline and Employee Engagement

The following outlines how Career Management, Human Resources and Organizational Development work together to create a healthy, productive engaged workforce.



Adapted from Butler, 2001: Howe, 2003

¹⁶ Stevens, P. (2003)



Career Management overlaps the areas that have traditionally been watched over by HRM and ODL functions. Implemented with a holistic approach, Career Management affects culture and purpose, helps build leaders, and increases trust. Career Management interventions convey that employees are recognized and valued for their contribution. When Career Management addresses internal communication and helps to change employee perceptions about the company and its mission, it influences and improves the people relationships in the organization. Employees become more aware of the policies and procedures that affect their positions.

The Third Discipline is a supporting solution, offering complementary approaches to a wide range of human resource and organizational development challenges. When employees are focused on their long-term contributions and feel committed to staying, it allows HRM and ODL to focus on their tasks at hand with enhanced information and knowledge, with reduced worry about staff shortages now or in the future. HRM and ODL will be supported with the information gleaned through Career Management initiatives allowing those groups to fine-tune and optimize their own initiatives.

As such, Career Management contributes to improved competitive advantage, because it goes beyond the conventional process of assisting individuals in identifying a career of choice and mapping out a path to get there. **Career Management is founded on the principle objective of helping people become career resilient, self-managed, self-reliant, and adaptable to change.** Career Management provides tools to help employees stay employable, and employers to attract and retain talented employees.



When individuals become more secure in themselves, in what they have to contribute, what they have to offer and how they market themselves in a constantly changing environment, they are freed from the anxiety and distraction that comes from working in marketplaces and companies that no longer offer security. When people feel more secure “about managing their own careers, they cooperate and contribute better to the needs of their work unit” ¹⁷.

A workforce that is well remunerated, well treated, well trained and truly engaged in their work – this is a formula that includes Career Management.

A good first question for organizations is to ask, “what is the lack of employee engagement costing us?”

Getting Started

Career Management programs must be designed specifically for the organization in the same way as HRM and ODL design and strategies to meet specific objectives. **Cookie-cutter solutions cannot work because everything must be linked back to the organization’s goals and objectives.** Customizing a program also makes sense because setting specific objectives makes facilitates measuring the return on investment.


To determine whether a career management program is the next step for your organization, walk your team through the following steps¹⁸.

¹⁷ Stevens, P. (p.1)

¹⁸ King, D. *The Business Case for Career Development* (2001).



1. **Assess your organizational objectives.**
How dependent are you on a committed, engaged workforce?
What kind of things do you already have in place that outlines your organizational objectives?
2. **Conduct a career management audit.**
Assess the organizational climate and determine how staff members view your company's performance in career management.
3. **Develop an organization "possibility statement".**
State the opportunities, needs, priorities, and rationale for committing to a career management initiative.
4. **Build the program in collaboration with employees.**
Assemble a career management project team that represents a diagonal thread through all levels of the organization.
5. **Select components for your career management program.**
Based on the results of your audit, design components to support the suggestions made by the employees. Link to existing strategies and desired outcomes.
6. **Ensure the tools and techniques include elements to address different learning styles.**
Incorporate exercises and models that can be delivered individually, in groups, and/or on-line that recognize all learners learn differently.
7. **Develop a communication strategy to introduce and promote the career management program.**
Reduce fear, eliminate cynicism and promote excitement.
8. **Determine the next step.**
Increased understanding provides and enables the next step.
What resources do you need to support you in bring a Career Management program forward in your organization.



Do you need a Career Management professional to support you and your organization through the process of cultivating a talent pool and creating a culture of engagement and accountability to the benefit of employees and employers?

Good Practice: Career Management Experiences

In an effort to reduce the anger of employees who wished to move forward in the company, only to find they did not have the right skills, **Sun Microsystems** established a “career resilience” program in 1991. As the program progressed, the workforce became more populated by people who consciously took control of their own lives and careers – to Sun’s benefit.

A successful program of this nature included a system to help employees assess their skills, interests, values, and temperament to determine positions they would be best suited for. Employees also had a system to benchmark skills and did so regularly. A self-assessment process enabled self-reflection and self-reliance, a process that employees learned to continue using throughout their careers. Ultimately, employees became more responsible for driving their own careers.

That is one specific example of a career management tool that resulted in greater engagement and effectiveness.

Common to all programs is the concept that the employer helps put the systems in place and it is then the employee’s job to follow through with the process to his or her own benefit.

Quebecor World Vancouver, a larger printing company, with union and non-unionized employees, facing increased pressure to compete in



changing markets, recognized the need to draw more deeply on the resources of its workforce to meet these challenges.

In a pilot program, employees and managers participated in sessions to envision their ideal workplace. The employees then participated in a workshop entitled *The Implicit Career Search*. This workshop takes a transpersonal approach to career development to help people expand their level of awareness. *The Implicit Career Search* provided the foundation for employees to shift perceptions and discard limiting beliefs. Managers also participated in workshops to learn and apply the same fundamentals.

In addition to the above workshop, employees in the pilot attended a series of career related workshops and received one-to-one coaching, and completed exercises using a career management tracking tool called the *Career Manager*™ to help them take more control of their own careers (and life). The results were dramatic:

“Of all the culture initiatives we are doing, this has made the biggest impact in the shortest amount of time” Dennis Wilkens,
General Manager Quebecor
World Vancouver

- 12 out of 13 participants increased their Level of Engagement.
- Participants became more proactive in their career development.
- Communication with co-workers, managers, and other departments improved.
- Participant’s confidence improved.
- The management team began to communicate more openly and improved how they worked together.

Vancouver based **Ballard Power Systems** are in the midst of implementing a career development program. Although in the initial stages, they have identified two key elements essential to



implementation: employee involvement and clear expectations.

Since meeting the needs of all of their internal stakeholders is essential to success Ballard created a Career Growth Council. This cross-functional group of supervisory and non supervisory employees offers feedback and guidance on the direction of the program, implementation plans and related training.

The Career Growth Council developed a career growth mission statement accompanied with defined roles of the key partners: employee, manager, and executive team. They believe that this cross-hierarchical approach is essential for our future success.

Since there are many challenges to implementing corporate change, Ballard found it essential to lay a strong foundation that will help pave the way for the change to occur.

Another reason for the effectiveness of Career Management programs is that they expand employees' knowledge and understanding about how the business of their employer works. **Raychem** and **3Com** focused particularly on that strategy. In addition to the Career Management components discussed above, these companies included regular sessions where employees learned more about the business and its operations. The result is that when employees know more about how the business runs they have a much better idea of how and where they can contribute more – and they do.

Return on Investment (ROI)

The ROI of Career Management and Leadership Development programs calculated per \$1,000 invested found ROI to be between \$5,450 and \$7,780.



A survey of 100 executives, mostly from Fortune 1000 companies, published in the *Manchester Review* (Vol.6, #1) concludes that a company's investment in providing coaching to its executives realized an average return on investment (ROI) of almost six times the cost of the coaching.

A study of the effects of coaching at B002 Allen Hamilton, Inc. revealed an average ROI of 689%.

British Columbia's **Envision Credit Union** developed "Envision U" as a novel way to develop employee linkages to corporate goals. Envision U is a "performance support system that integrates learning, performance and career management systems with succession planning and e-learning."¹⁹ The new system has "helped produce a 17-percent increase in Envision's organizational effectiveness and career management and training over the last three years."²⁰

How do you put your people first and still create a growth-oriented yet cost-effective business environment?

Achieving a worthwhile return on the investment you make in your employees is the fundamental goal of Career Management practitioners. Offering a range of Career Management programs to employees will assist in generating a return in any number of areas:

- **Reduced Turnover**
Leads to lower recruitment and replacement costs, both direct and hidden.

¹⁹ Conn, H., *HRMA's High-Performance Profile, People Talk, Spring 2004*

²⁰ *IBID*



- **Improved Skill/Task Matches**
Leads to more consistent and reliable results and less critical and costly mistakes.
- **Increased Confidence**
Results in better and faster decision-making, and acceptance of responsibility.
- **Gain in Productivity**
- **Increased Levels of Engagement**

ROI varies in each organization, and from one situation to the next. Establishing the measurement points, and periodically tracking improvements is key.

In summary, Career Management is about regarding employees as an investment whose value can be enhanced, rather than considering them only as cost.²¹ Career Management programs are designed to assist individuals within an organization in determining *where* they fit and *how* they want to contribute in the long term to a company.

Integrating CM into the organization's strategies provides employees with an opportunity to be engaged in their job role, connected to the organization's goals and objectives and accountable to their role now and in future.

Ownership and empowerment are in the hands that hold the work; they make the difference between ongoing success or possible slides in the organization, presenting many opportunities to improve productivity and performance for employers and employees.

²¹ *IBID*



Next Steps

If you would like to know more about the value of creating a culture of engagement in your organization and how the Third Discipline can address specific career management issues you are facing, contact the authors at the Career Management Association of BC via info@bccma.ca or at 604.319.3977.



About the Authors

Members of the Career Management Association of BC

The authors form the Career Engagement Working Group, a committee of the Career Management Association of BC and tasked with raising awareness and promoting the value and benefits of aligning career engagement strategies with corporate practice.

The purpose of this committee is to support organizations with significant and meaningful changes in the productivity and performance of their workforce.

Terresa Augustine, Executive Director of the Career Management Association of BC, a non-profit whose mandate is to identify and move forward the interests and needs of organizations, associations and practitioners impacted by career development, career management and career information within the Province of British Columbia. Terresa is 2004 Chair of the BC Career Information Partnership (BCCIP) network and a member of the National Integrated Delivery Strategy for Sector and Sector-like Councils Advisory Committee.

Emma Hamer, principal of Hamer Associates Career and Performance Management (www.hamer-associates.ca) and an experienced career strategist, with previous careers in sales and marketing, technical communications, and executive operational management, she knows that innovative human capital development is the key factor to increase productivity, employee satisfaction, and competitive advantage.

Shauna Jones, MA, principal of People Performance and Power Corporate and Personal Consulting Group(www.peopleperformancepower.com), works



with organizations to create a culture of engagement. She also designs and delivers career development programs. She is passionate about helping individuals become highly engaged in the work they love to do so they may help their organizations gain competitive advantage. She is a Board Member of the BC Centre for Quality (BCCQ), and a member of the British Columbia Human Resources Management Association (HRMA).

Denise Lloyd, **CHRP**, DLD Consulting has been involved in the employment services sector for over 10 years in a variety of roles ranging from front line service delivery to large-scale management roles. An accomplished trainer involved in national initiatives including the Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners. Denise has an extensive Human Resources background and is a Certified Human Resource Professional (CHRP) with the British Columbia Human Resources Management Association.

Special Thanks

Special thanks to our reviewers who took the time to read this white paper and provide well thought through comments and to our editor, Heather Prittie of Prittie and Associates.