



Organizations in the 21st Century

The Canadian Union of Skilled Workers was built to provide Members with an organization that will allow workers to participate in the transition to the New Era that is emerging over the coming Century. We are now 20 years into the 21st Century and it is no surprise that the world around us is changing.

*“The Fourth Industrial Revolution represents a fundamental change in the way we live, work and relate to one another. It is a new chapter in human development, enabled by extraordinary technology advances commensurate (equal) with those of the first, second and third industrial revolutions. These advances are merging the physical, digital and biological worlds in ways that create both huge promise and potential peril. The speed, breadth and depth of this revolution is forcing us to rethink how countries develop, how organizations create value and even what it means to be human. The Fourth Industrial Revolution is about more than just technology-driven change; it is an opportunity to help everyone, including leaders, policy-makers and people from all income groups and nations, to harness converging technologies in order to create an inclusive, human-centered future. **The real opportunity is to look beyond technology, and find ways to give the greatest number of people the ability to positively impact their families, organizations and communities.**”*

World Economic Forum – 2020 (www.weforum.org)

There are many definitions that try to capture the characteristics of the New Era that is emerging around us every day. The World Economic Forum is only one of them. The key learning for CUSW members is not in the definition but in shining the light on the opportunities that this New Era provides. The quote above concludes with - **The real opportunity is to look beyond technology, and find ways to give the greatest number of people the ability to positively impact their families, organizations and communities.** When we formed CUSW in 1999, recognizing the opportunity to have a positive impact in our Society was the starting point for building our future.

When embarking on the journey of building the 21st Century Union we first had to create the environment that would allow us as an organization to adapt to the changes that were coming. The members set the direction of the organization through the Objects set out in the Constitution. The Culture that would form the base for building our future was set out in the Values and Beliefs as well as the Policies that framed how we would work together as we embraced the changes ahead. The design of CUSW provides a road forward and the opportunity provides the tools to get there.

The 21st Century is emerging much as the founding members of CUSW expected. Reviewing some of the key factors contributing to the success of 21st Century organizations that are also making the transition helps to inform us about our own progress and provides guidance as we set next steps in our journey.

Culture – The Core of Change

Changing the way that an organization functions is directly connected to the way that an organization thinks and acts. As the 21st Century emerges the definitions of Culture are shifting. Historically the culture of an organization was established by observing the practices within the organization. Future actions of that organization were predictable based on the past behaviour. Today, organizational culture is defined as “the underlying beliefs, assumptions, values and ways of interacting that contribute to the unique social and psychological environment of an organization”. (Gotham Culture)

In other words, the design and structure of the organization will create the Culture.

Recent studies have confirmed this result. In reviewing studies on this topic, the evidence provided in this research identifies that “transformational leadership is associated with organizational culture, primarily through the processes of articulating a vision, and to a lesser extent through the setting of high-performance expectations and providing individual support to workers. These findings are consistent, extend existing research and provide evidence of the capacity of **vision as a Culture builder in organizations**. (Kotter & Heskett, 1992; Schein, 1985, 1992; Trice & Beyer, 1993)

These results are consistent with the approach that CUSW members set out from the very beginning.

Articulate the Vision, set the direction, communicate clear expectations and provide individual supports to the workers. These components will drive the Culture within CUSW.

Leadership in the 21st Century

The role of the Leader in the 20th Century was one that was very top down and hierarchical. The leader was the focal point and the workforce took direction. This was the culture of the day. The workers did as they were directed to do. In the 21st Century a new culture is emerging within organizations. The concept of Leader in the past has been replaced with the “leadership style” of the future.

Old style "command and control" leadership is, if not yet dead, certainly in its death throes.” The top down, hierarchical method of managing that was the prevalent business practice from the Industrial Revolution and well into the last half of the 20th century has mostly disappeared. Decentralized decision making has been adopted by most businesses and organizations. Command and control leadership is being replaced with a “style of leadership” that is collaborative and embraces ideas from all parts of the organization.

“Purpose and principle, clearly understood and articulated, and commonly shared, are the genetic code of any healthy organization. To the degree that you hold purpose and principles in common among you, you can dispense with command and control. People will know how to behave in

accordance with them, and they'll do it in thousands of unimaginable, creative ways. The organization will become a vital, living set of beliefs." (Green Key. LLC).

This is the Culture that was the vision of the Members of CUSW when we started on our journey back in 1999. Society is beginning to embrace these ideas. We are starting to see the emergence of a new dialogue around the need to build a culture of leadership style around these principles. As we continue the path to a time when every worker will be a leader there will be a transition period when we still embrace the need to nurture the transition towards this new cultural norm.

The concept of the "culture leader" has emerged as a way to describe the transition from old to new. The culture leader of tomorrow is an old-style leader that is moving change to the new "leadership style". They have to let go of their need to control and their fears of not knowing. They have to transition from a "command-and-control" mindset to one of **trusting** and helping people be their best. They have to develop a whole-of-organization approach to thinking, which allows them to connect data, processes, people and results beyond traditional boundaries.

Traits of the "culture leader" - They are curious, responsible, and learn from their mistakes. They are not experts, but they can find the expertise where it resides, from stakeholders through to employees and machines. Their vision is clear, and they can flex the roadmap along the way. To be effective as a networked leader, they have developed openness, caring and listening skills. And everything they do adds value to the stakeholders. They are connected and caring.

The research confirms that the next step of change in the organization cannot come solely from more pressure on the workforce. Instead it will come from utilizing the strengths, the skills and the capabilities of the people. When we treat every member as a leader that can be trusted, the Command Control lifestyles of the past will be phased out by natural selection.

A very important job of 21st Century Leadership, then, is to attract, retain, and continue to develop the talents and skills of the people within the organization. Talent is a success multiplier and attracting the right members to participate in CUSW is a major part of the next steps in our journey.

Talent - Building the Future of the organization.

The word Talent has taken on a meaning in the 21st Century as we look to find the people who are best aligned with building the 21st Century Organization. The concept of the Knowledge Worker is one of the building blocks that CUSW embraced from the very beginning. The term Knowledge Worker was originally coined by Peter Drucker back in 1954. In a 1992 article for HBR, Drucker wrote "In a matter of decades, society altogether rearranges itself – its worldview, its basic values, its social and political structures, its arts, its key institutions." Fifty years later that new world exists.

The Vision of the founding CUSW members was based on the understanding that there would be a transition to a Society and a workplace that was managed by the workers. "Knowledge Workers have to manage themselves," Drucker advised. "They have to have autonomy." The key components that support this transition have fallen into place. The Information Age has provided modern forms of accessing information that are revolutionizing the way that workers can engage in the society, in communities and in the work that they do. "It is information," Drucker wrote, "that enables Knowledge Workers to do their job."

Pursuing the opportunities that emerge for worker autonomy "begin with redesigning work environments to foster new knowledge creation – that is, to move beyond sharing what's already known, to helping workers make genuine discoveries more quickly by tackling performance challenges together." (Drucker 1992) To realize this objective

there is still an awfully long way to go. Workers that are successful in these environments will have characteristics that contribute to the success of this approach. Characteristics - Each person is a leader, Emotional Intelligence, Learning Agility, Strategic Thinking, Resilience, Neuro/leadership

The same HBR article has reported that there are a few simple things that can be done to advance the transition. Organizations must "Provide a much stronger sense of purpose. In the last year, survey after survey revealed that the vast majority of employees are not engaged in what they do. One big reason is the failure to connect people's jobs with a larger sense of purpose. Too often, the organization seems to be an end in itself; no meaningful link has been forged between the daily tasks of the enterprise and how they serve the customer and better society. "What motivates – and especially what motivates knowledge workers – is what motivates volunteers," Drucker wrote. Among other things, "they need to know the organization's mission and to believe in it." A paycheck, even a fat one, is not enough. No longer can organizations expect to inspire "by satisfying Knowledge Workers' greed," Drucker counselled. "It will have to be done by satisfying their values."

The very same concepts that apply to the workplace also apply to the operation of CUSW. As we continue the transition to being an organization where Members have the autonomy to manage themselves, we will need to continue to connect with the members on the Purpose of CUSW. This can be done through education and forums such as the Participation Roundtable. Building the Capacity to foster knowledge creation will become a major part of building our organization going forward.

Mental Health – An epidemic in workplace health disorders

CUSW Values and Beliefs along with the Human Rights and Equality Policies were put in place from the very beginning in response to the negative mental health impacts of the traditional 20th Century workplace. Research in 2020 has begun to identify the negative impacts caused by the 20th Century workplace culture.

"Just this year, the World Health Organization classified burnout as an official syndrome related to "chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed." The O.C. Tanner Institute's 2020 Global Culture Report found that 79% of employees are suffering from some sort of burnout at work; 40% of those employees report moderate to severe burnout."

Burnout takes an enormous toll on employees and organizations. Globally, burnout results in 120,000 deaths per year and \$190 billion in healthcare spending. In addition to an increase in the risk of Type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease, gastrointestinal issues, and high cholesterol, employees who feel burned out are 23% more likely to visit the emergency room. Companies see 376% less engagement, 87% more turnover, and 22% decreased work output when employees feel burned out.

Burnout is the result of chronic culture deficiencies. In other words, bad workplace cultures are contributing to higher rates of burnout. Cultures with a lack of a clear purpose, few opportunities to grow, lackluster leadership, poor wellbeing, and no appreciation or connection will inevitably lead to employees burning out. The question is not if, but when. Poor workplace cultures lead to a 157% increase in moderate to severe burnout." O.C. Tanner

It is important to note that the evidence confirms that these conditions are directly connected to the workplace culture that is in place in the organization or the places where we work. This same research pointed to workplace culture as the primary cause of the stress that is impacting the workforce. The evidence goes further - "People who are on the **energetic, motivated, and on the creative side** are both more likely to be entrepreneurial and more likely to have strong emotional states," says Freeman. Those states may include depression, despair, hopelessness,

worthlessness, loss of motivation, and suicidal thinking. The very people that we are attracting to CUSW because of their ability to function as Knowledge Workers are the ones most vulnerable to the effects of the negative culture.

At CUSW we are still experiencing these same negative results both with members that are participating in building CUSW as well as our members in workplaces covered by our collective agreements. These trends can be reversed where there are conditions put in place to change the Culture within the organization or the workplace. CUSW Values and Beliefs along with the Human Rights and Equality Policies were put in place to counter these negative results and more work can be done to connect the members with the Purpose of these principles. In addition, there is clear evidence to show that these negative impacts are reduced in a “psychologically safe” environment where **people feel free to share ideas divergent from the dominant opinion**. In the same way that Knowledge Workers are not swayed by big bucks, the evidence shows culture deficiencies are not corrected by superficial responses.

“More vacation days and on-site massages **are not** going to prevent employee burnout. **But having a great workplace culture can**. Provide employees with a meaningful purpose that inspires them. Show how their work makes a difference by recognizing their accomplishments and sharing stories of success. Train leaders to build trust and have positive interactions with their people. Provide a sense of belonging, growth, and connection in your teams. Put employee wellbeing before your bottom line. By focusing on creating positive everyday experiences for employees, companies can create cultures that help mitigate, and even prevent, employee burnout.” O.C. Tanner

Trust - the foundation for building the organization of the future

“With the forces of digitalization, globalization, and democratization in the workplace, the landscape has changed vastly and now hierarchical models no longer work for businesses. In the 21st century, business is expected to drive performance by aligning people around purpose and through empowerment of leaders at all levels throughout the organization.” (Whirling Chief)

“In the foundation of that empowerment journey lays our ability to build trust with one another.”

Definition: Trust is the organization’s **willingness**, based upon its culture and communication behaviours in relationships and transactions, to be open and honest, based on belief that another individual, group, or organization is also competent, open and honest, concerned, reliable, and identified with common goals, norms and values. (Google)

Building Capacity for 2020 and Beyond

21st Century organizations are quickly moving towards the model that the members of CUSW have put in place to guide us as we move forward to “**find ways to give the greatest number of people the ability to positively impact their families, organizations and communities**.”

The opportunities to implement this concept are real. Society is transforming at an astonishing pace. It is up to organizations like CUSW to create the culture and to provide the supports that will drive this transition forward. Going forward into the future, all Members of CUSW will have the opportunity to work with other people that support the building a “leadership style” that embraces the Principles set out in our founding Vision for the future. We built the right model. Working together we will succeed.