

# The TMC ADVISOR

The Advisor is a periodical published by TMC containing articles of interest to Canadian Business Professionals

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## Avoiding Emergency Preparedness *By Guy Robertson*

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## Improving Hybrid Teamwork *By Ellen Koskinen-Dodgson*

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## Changing Faces In Our Workforce *By Elleni Koskinen*

Canadian workforce demographics are noticeably changing, and they will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. In fact, there are three main trends for the 2020's. These trends are important for businesses across the county, because they will continue to guide the trajectory of businesses' successes or failures. Here's the rundown.



## Wi-Fi Woes *By Peter Aggus*

In theory, modern Wi-Fi Access Points (APs) should be able to provide Gigabit speeds and several hundred metres range. So why are many disappointed with what they get? Sadly, Wi-Fi is not plug and play—at least not in a shared environment with competing devices. Users need to understand a few basics, some of which are counter-intuitive.



### Sharing

Everything about 802.11 Wi-Fi is “shared”—especially bandwidth. There are two bands—one at 2.4GHz and the other at 5GHz. Nowadays, only older (legacy) equipment is confined to 2.4GHz. There is not much capacity at 2.4GHz (which has just 3 channels, each 5MHz wide). If you want capacity and speed, go for the 5GHz band (which has 24 channels, each 20MHz wide).

One client we worked with had a food court served by two APs on the ceiling 10m above the tables. To increase capacity they added a third and they were surprised that capacity dropped. The issue was that several food court vendors ran their own Wi-Fi—making all the APs fight for channels. APs detect other APs trying to use the same channel, so they will either pick a different channel or reduce power to stop interference. The two APs originally installed grabbed 2 of the 3 channels and the food vendors ended up sharing the third—all worked well. Adding a third ceiling AP caused it to grab the same channel as one of the other ceiling APs, so both reduced power. Lower power equals less range, so the APs couldn't reach the floor anymore, hence degraded service.

### Legacy Users

The oldest Wi-Fi still in use is 802.11b, which dates back to 1999 and provides speeds up to 11MBit/s. The newest 6th gen technology (802.11ax) provides access speeds in the Gigabit/s range.

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APs can be configured to allow any Wi-Fi standard to connect—or they can be configured to block older and slower standards. That is worth doing if speed (or capacity) is important because the Wi-Fi protocol slows down to the speed of the slowest user—no chance of GB/s speeds if you have an 802.11b user on the AP.

We worked with some airports that were having issues being unable to get the rated capacity. The problem turned out to be that Wi-Fi was shared by travellers waiting to board at a gate and by the aircraft that had just docked. Airlines use Wi-Fi as a simple way to reload their entertainment systems between flights. However, newer Wi-Fi systems are not certified for aviation use so the aircraft were restricted to 802.11b. The solution was to install APs outside for the aircraft and inside for the travellers—with the latter set to block legacy speeds.

### Radio Illumination

Think of a Wi-Fi AP like a floodlight: you need to point it in the general direction of the users. One client we worked with was having issues that turned out to be caused by their electrical installer: they had installed the APs upside down, so Wi-Fi coverage was only great if the users were on the ceiling.

### Recommendations

- Make sure you site the APs so they “illuminate” where users are located and keep them close to users.
- If range is not an issue, focus on the 5GHz band.
- For best performance, turn off the 2.4GHz radios.
- Unless you must serve legacy users (like 802.11b), set all APs to serve modern standards only.
- If you need to support legacy users, set up separate APs specifically for them.

If you'd like to comment on this article or explore these ideas further, contact me at [peter@tmcconsulting.ca](mailto:peter@tmcconsulting.ca).

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Preparing for emergencies takes time, effort, and money. Why bother? You and your coworkers have better things to do, such as deleting e-mails and planning holiday parties. You can't neglect these tasks. To complete them, you should avoid disaster planning as much as possible. But this can be difficult. To thwart emergency preparedness planning, follow these commonsensical steps.



### [The How-To Guide](#)

Inspired by government propaganda, employees may demand fire drills. Instead of celebrating staff birthdays in your cafeteria, they may be tempted to take first aid courses and learn how to use fire extinguishers. They might store flashlights in their desks. They might even start to back up their data. There could be no end to such activities unless you stop them. But how?

- Cancel the appointment and training of your organization's fire wardens.
- Postpone fire drills until nobody remembers when the last one took place.
- Refuse to schedule and pay for first aid courses. Instead, you should encourage employees to take courses in gluten-free cooking, roller-skating, and toenail maintenance. Offer to pay for these in support of professional development.
- Refuse to distribute emergency preparedness literature such as posters, pamphlets, and booklets to employees. If you catch employees reviewing a website that covers emergency related topics, tell them to delete unwanted e-mails instead. Or they could create an inventory of the organization's party decorations.
- Remind everyone to keep their weak passwords for the foreseeable future and to stop backing up vital data,



which is a waste of time. Remember that all data is "backed up on the network" (even though it isn't).

- Avoid consultants. If your organization hires a consultant to develop your company's emergency preparedness plan, be sure to take the plan and lose it on your network or store the hardcopy in a "dead storage" cabinet. Peel off labels on any three-ring binders that contain preparedness information to ensure that what's lost, stays lost.
- Ignore your Occupational Health & Safety (OHS) Committee. Schedule their next meeting a year or two from now, then bribe the Committee chair with gluten-free doughnuts to avoid making any meeting arrangements. Above all, do not allow the Committee or anyone else in your organization to

schedule training sessions. Tell anyone who challenges these measures to concentrate on plans for your organization's summer picnic.

- Remember that all emergencies happen elsewhere. Remind everyone that earthquakes destroy cities in California and Asia, and that heat waves bake communities in South America and the Middle East. Remind yourself that the local fire department can extinguish any blaze in your building before it gets uncomfortably smoky or hot.
- Stop talking about epidemics and pandemics. Covid is gone, never to return. File your face masks in dead storage.

These measures have proven effective in countless organizations, and should work well in yours. You'll save time, money, and effort that you can use to support otherwise worthwhile endeavours.

If you'd like to comment on this article or explore these ideas further, contact me at [guy@tmcconsulting.ca](mailto:guy@tmcconsulting.ca).

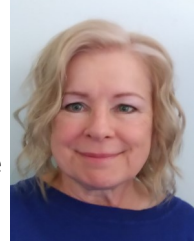
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## Improving Hybrid Teamwork *By Ellen Koskinen-Dodgson*

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### **Hybrid Problems**

Just like separate departments can develop distinctive departmental cultures through shared experiences and management styles, the disconnected parts of your hybrid team can lose some of the style that used to be normal when everyone was in the office.

For example:

- Your team may have had a collaborative culture but you now see a drift into pockets of different styles such as staff competing for attention and recognition or the dreaded bureaucratic "not my job" style.
- Onboarding new employees can also be a challenge as they may not naturally pick up the right social approach to work.
- Bonding between on-site staff makes them less likely to seek input from remote staff.
- Information sharing through casual hallway meetups never reaches remote staff.

### **Tech Helps**

Technology, properly planned and used, can make a big difference:

- Require everyone to use your video app (Zoom, Teams, Webex...) whether they're in the office or not. Alternately, make sure that every meeting room is set up so that every person can be clearly seen and heard.



- Enterprise social software, a catch-all term that encompasses all business social networking and collaboration tools, usually includes some level of team messaging, project management, task management, and collaboration tools such as Microsoft Teams. It can be used for project questions, project file access, updates to schedules, and even callouts—who's up for lunch at Pino's?

### **Team Building**

You, as a manager, can make a hybrid team work more like an on-site team. First, you need to be aware of the potential problems that a hybrid team might experience. You then need to observe your team in action, finding out which problems exist in your team, then create an action plan to reduce each problem.

For example, you might:

- Call out behaviour that you want to encourage, like on a video call—"Thanks, Robert, that's how we keep on track."
- Enforce prompt project updates on your collaboration system.
- Schedule informal one-on-one chats with every team member to check in and see how they're doing and what might be bugging them.
- Book ten minute coffee meetings as part of the onboarding process for new staff, letting them meet other team members one at a time.
- Encourage bonding by scheduling informal virtual lunches where people can talk about their outside interests. You might "prime the pump" with a trivia contest.
- Organize off-site social meetups.

If you'd like to comment on this article or explore these ideas further, contact me at [ellen@tmcconsulting.ca](mailto:ellen@tmcconsulting.ca).

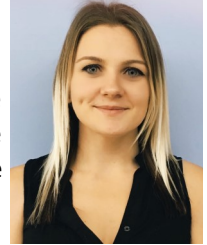
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### **The Aging Population**

Baby boomers, the generation born between 1946 and 1964, used to make up the majority of our workforce. However, for the past decade, their numbers have been declining as more and more boomers transition into retirement. As they continue to leave the workforce, the labour pool will grow more slowly, and in some places it will even shrink.

What does this mean for employers?

- Employees will have more choices of where to work, so organizations will need to set themselves apart by offering benefits, flexibility, and competitive compensation.
- Staffing shortages may still arise, so companies need to make strategic investments in technology, equipment, and other resources to maximize productivity and operational efficiency.

### **The Youth Revolution**

Millennial and Gen Z populations are set to overtake the Canadian workforce. In fact, by 2030 it is estimated that they will make up over 50% of the working population. As with every generation, "the youth of today" have their own ideas for how things should be done, and they're not satisfied to maintain the status quo. If things can be done better, then they should be done better.

Additionally, Generation Z in particular is not willing to sacrifice for their jobs. If their ideals don't align with their



organization, or if they feel that they aren't being treated fairly, then they'll just leave. The mindset of "just grin and bear it" that has plagued the workforce for many years may finally be at an end, thanks to the youth of today.

So how can you attract the younger crowd to join your company?

- Create partnerships with colleges and universities for internship opportunities. This can be a great way to introduce yourself to a new crowd of potential hires.
- Get onto social media and be active! In the instant digital age, a continuous online presence is vital to staying current, otherwise you're likely to be forgotten as soon as they scroll away.
- Don't be afraid of being witty, funny, goofy, or sarcastic. Show

off your sense of humour, and make the workplace fun.

- Invest in training. Properly training your employees dramatically improves retention rates, and improves overall efficiency, productivity, and job satisfaction.

### **Cultural Diversity**

By the end of this decade, immigrants will account for up to 80% of Canada's population growth. This means that they will play a key role in boosting Canada's shrinking workforce, and help fill the gaps left behind by older employees bound for retirement.

What are some of the benefits of hiring employees that are new immigrants?

- A diverse workforce can improve a company's capacity for global expansion.
- Federal programs are available to support the hiring of new immigrants, both in finding applicants, and in supplementing their wages.

If you'd like to comment on this article or explore these ideas further, contact me at [elleni@tmcconsulting.ca](mailto:elleni@tmcconsulting.ca).

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