

# CHANGE THE WORLD 9:00 – 5:00

## 50 actions to change the world at work



healthyworkplaceweek.ca

Contributed by Paul Edney (Director, We Are What We Do Canada) and adapted from: **We Are What We Do**  
(<http://www.wearewhatwedo.org/>)

Most of us spend our waking lives – working. This activity is about what we can do through our work to change the world. The ideas in this activity come from the book “**Change the World 9-5**” published by an organization called **We Are What We Do**. The book is full of suggestions and ideas to help you change the world at work and help make yourself and the people around you happier and healthier.

It's all based on the very simple formula:

### Small changes x lots of people = BIG change

And if making the planet a happier, safer, more sustainable place isn't a good enough target, then there's even a business case. A 2005 poll showed that 82% of us believe it is important to buy from companies who share our concerns.

So – imagine, believe and begin. Try one or all of the below 14 actions during Canada's Healthy Workplace Week to not only change your own world at work, but also help change the world while you work!

#### **SAY THANKS – Action # 97**

'Thank you.'

These are quite possibly the nicest two words in the language. Because, like praise, gratitude is its' own virtue. It just works. You know when you get a note or even an email saying 'thank you'? How does it make you feel? Be sure to pass on the nice feeling.

FYI: 100% of Canadians would feel more appreciated if they were thanked.

#### **PRAISE PEOPLE – Action # 59**

- ✓ 'You're looking good today, CJ.'
- ✓ 'Great idea you had for the frozen fish client, Susan.'
- ✓ 'I'm so glad you're part of this meeting, Brian. You always make meetings come alive.'

*Sincere praising is worth persevering because it makes everybody work better and it makes the workplace a whole lot happier.* For instance, I told the people who came up with this action how much I liked it. They said how much they appreciated my views. We all felt a little more recognized than we had before.

#### **START A CARPOOL – Action # 56**

You can help the environment and make life a bit friendlier by figuring out how to share rides to and from work. Who knows – you might find some new friends while saving the planet. That's like helping two wounded birds with one bandage.

The journey of a thousand steps begins with pulling on your runners and taking that first step.

*FYI: Every day 10 million seats go empty on the road.*

#### **DON'T BE AN IDEAS KILLER – Action # 54**

At Unilever they have an approach they call '**Build**' – i.e. *build on what other people say, don't knock it down*. Commit to **Build** on your colleagues' ideas and see if you notice a difference.

Helpful ways to do this do NOT include the following:

- x 'I think what Brian meant to say is this...'
- x 'Great idea. Unfortunately, when Smallbottles tried it, it bankrupted them...'
- x 'I love it. But what do I know? I'm as mad as a cow.'

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### **BLOW THE WHISTLE ON BULLYING – Action # 96**

1 in 3 employees say they've been bullied at work. Bullying isn't okay in the schoolyard, and it isn't okay at work.

### **PRACTICE MOBILE MANNERS – Action # 71**

We've all seen it – and yes, maybe some of us have been guilty of it ourselves. But the etiquette of using a mobile (cell, blackberry, etc) is pretty simple:

- Keep it quiet.
- Keep it short.
- And try to avoid it while you're meeting with others.

*FYI: Currently there are approximately 18.5 million wireless phone subscribers in Canada compared with around 4 million in 1997 and around 2 million in 1994. (Statistics Canada & Canadian Wireless Telecommunications Association)*

### **SHUT DOWN YOUR COMPUTER PROPERLY – Action # 69**

Yes, we know. It takes an extra minute but it makes a huge difference, and it's a small step everyone can take.

*FYI: One computer left on all day results in the emission of 1,500 pounds of carbon dioxide in a year. It would take 100 to 500 trees to absorb that amount of extra carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere.*

### **TAKE BREAKS – Action # 66**

Stress is infectious. If you get stressed out, you'll pass it on to someone else.

So if you can avoid getting stressed out, you stop the vicious circle from starting. And the best way to do this is to take breaks.

You know all those books in the self-help section called things like 'Don't Sweat the Chicken Soup'? They all tell you to stop, take a deep breath, count to ten. They are right. Most of the time, you'll realize that the problem you're facing is something you've faced before or that it is something that isn't gonna kill you this time.

### **LEAVE WORK ON TIME AT LEAST ONCE A WEEK – Action # 73**

When I see people leaving work bang on time, I think two things.

1. That person has got their priorities right. They'll probably live longer than me and have a happier life.
2. They've got no chance in hell of being the next CEO.

But the fact is, we should all leave work on time – to spend time with our family or friends... or make time for yourself. Pack your things away and walk towards the door.

*FYI:*

1. On average, Canadians worked 536 minutes or 8.9 hours per working day in 2005, an increase from 506 minutes or 8.4 hours 20 years earlier. (Found at <http://www.cbc.ca/canada/story/2007/02/13/family-time.html>).
2. On average workers spent 45 minutes less with their family each work day in 2005 than they did two decades earlier. (<http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/English/070213/d070213b.htm>)

### **SHOW EMPATHY – Action # 77**

If you've ever had to go through a divorce while sitting in a meeting to discuss next year's sales figures, you'll find a new meaning to the words 'hell on earth'.

Every day, with measureless heroism, people are dealing with all kinds of terrible things.

Just treat people with respect. Be aware that we are all sentient, suffering human beings. Be nice to each other as it is very likely that you do not know the whole story.

*FYI: Depression is the fastest rising source of disability in Canada.*