

Hiring and Retention in Aquatics

Where Have All the Aquatics Professionals Gone?

Welcome

A Little Bit About Me...

- In Aquatics since 2002 and an Aqua Fitness instructor since 2003
- Teacher of Fitness Leaders with BCRPA
- Worked for YMCA, Surrey, Delta, Burnaby, Mission, and New Westminister
- Degree in Occupational Health in Safety - specialization Aquatics
- Proud owner of PerformanceH2O
- Work with various municipalities across the lower mainland to create, improve, and strengthen fitness systems
- Goal is to provide high quality aquatic and fitness content across BC



Why Are We Here?

To gain a deeper understanding of hiring and retention in Aquatics. How we can improve our hirings and retain our staff.

- Good ol' days
- What is different now?
- Current state of the Aquatic industry
- An “us” problem or a “them” problem?
- How can we change?
- Tools and tricks for hiring and retention





POOL ENDS →

BURNABY WATER POLO CLUB
GOT GAME?
www.burnabywaterpolo.com

Burnaby
Caprice
www.BCSC.org

Burnaby
Barracu
Swim & Water Polo
www.burnabybarracu.com

AQUAFIT
INFORMATION

WOMEN

How Things Used to Be....

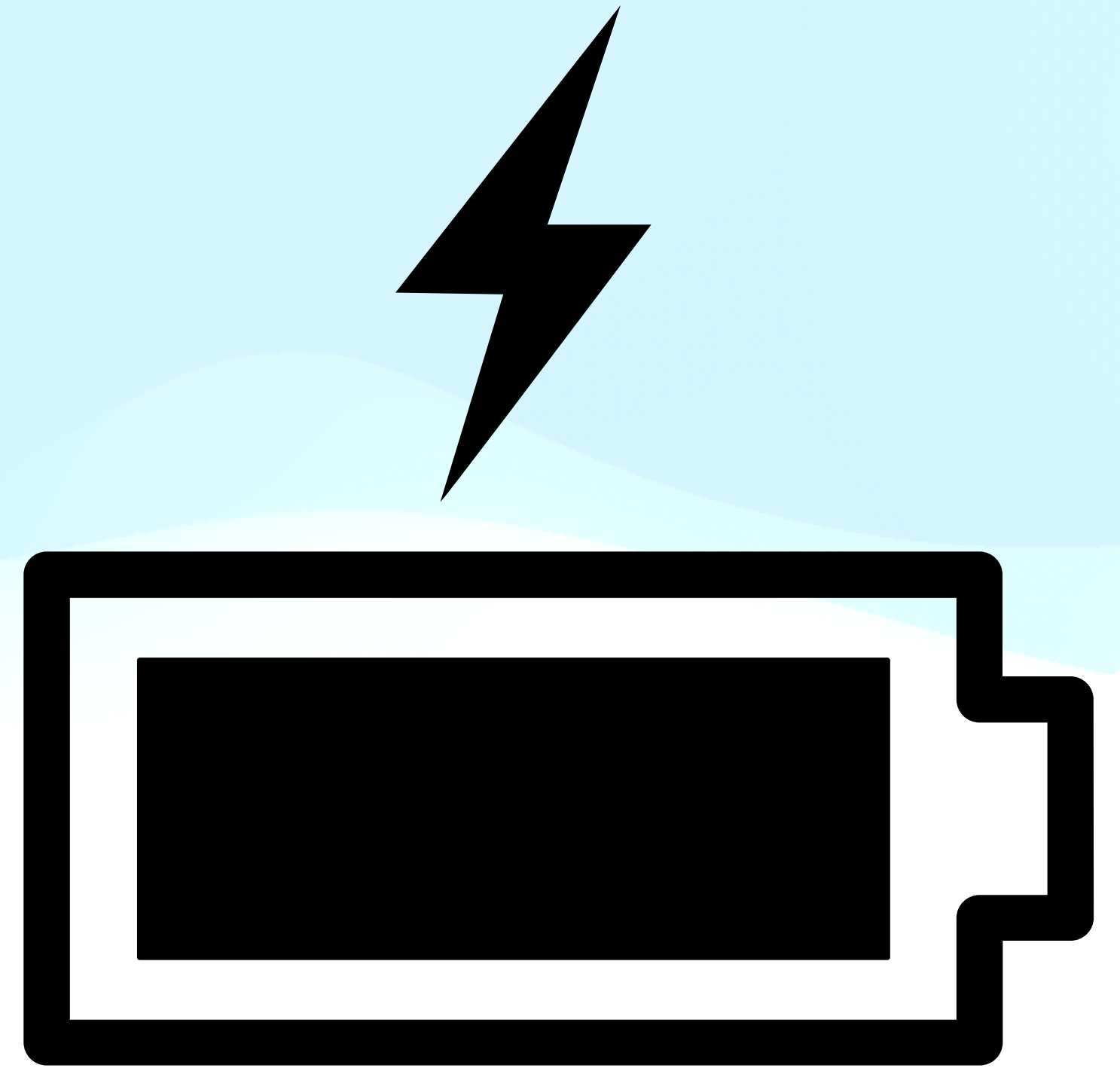
- Surplus of applications for each hiring
- Hirings took place a couple times of year, usually first and third quarter
- Hires were mostly “deck-ready” and required less on-the-job training
- Viewed as a career or a stepping stone to a career
- Hires wanted to work and understood the natural “progression” of the position
- Operational processes were more simple and less strict with a “...laid-back Lifeguard vibe”
- Diverse workplace experience demographics

What is Different Now?

- Large number of applications but fewer successful candidates
- Consistent (and seemingly constant) hirings throughout the year
- Huge increase and need for on-the-job training and inservices upon hiring (less “deck-ready”)
- Largely viewed as a way to “...pay for school” or a short-term job
- Would prefer not to teach, with the expectation of more guard hours regardless of experience
- Might not “need” to work
- Long hirings and strict workplace processes
- Newer workplace demographics

Impacts

- Hirings that yield fewer results
- Burn-out and competition among the municipalities for qualified staff
- Long and intensive inservice seasons
- Frequent staff turnover
- Changes to workplace atmosphere and flow
- Increased operational and enforcement errors
- Increased need for Supervisor/Managerial guidance



Current State of the Aquatics Industry

RECRUITMENT

- Long, intensive, frequent, and costly hirings
- Supervisors doing recruitment in addition to their regular tasks
- Increased overall workload and workplace stress
- Existing systems struggle as a result of the consistent stream of incoming and outgoing staff
- Pre-hiring training quality not as high or complete
- Compromised hiring standards
- Reliance on HR timelines

Current State of the Aquatics Industry

RETENTION

- Hiring is often step one of the “on-boarding” process
- Facilities still seem to be short staffed and/or needing coverage
- Staff may move on after training is complete
- Onboarded staff may accept positions at other municipalities, depending on what “perks” are offered
- Subconscious/conscious competition amongst the municipalities
- Inexperienced supervisors training new staff
- Increased job dissatisfaction

Industry Changes

Pandemic restart

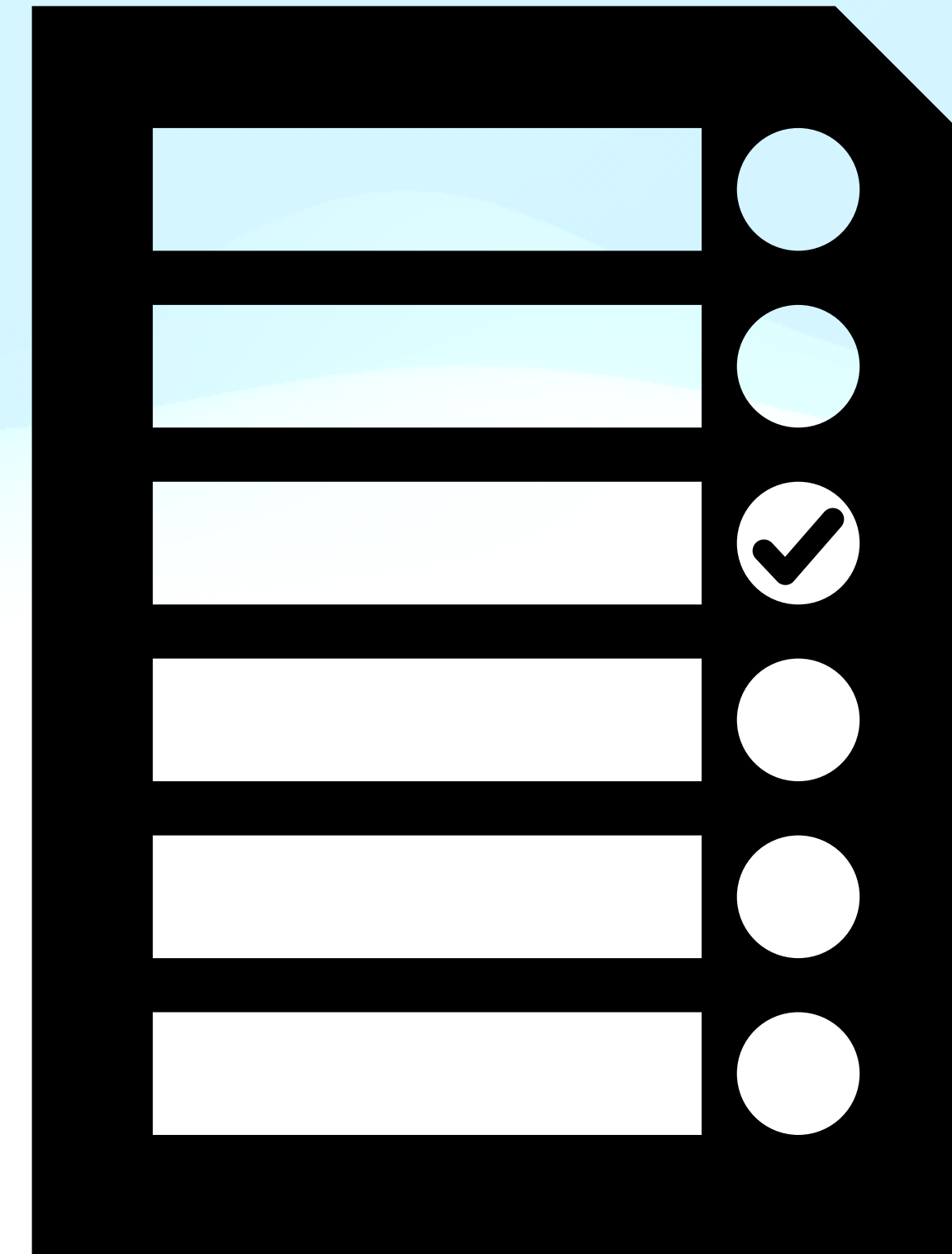
Red Cross steps down as main provider of swimming lesson offerings

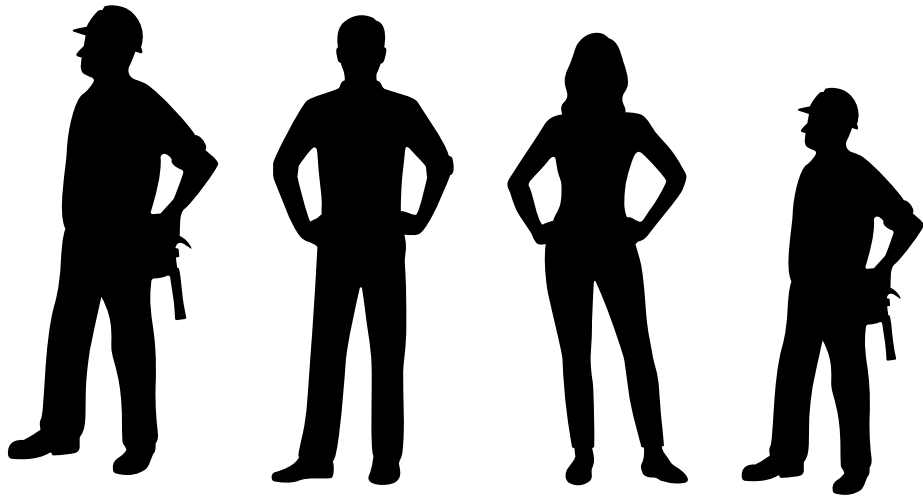
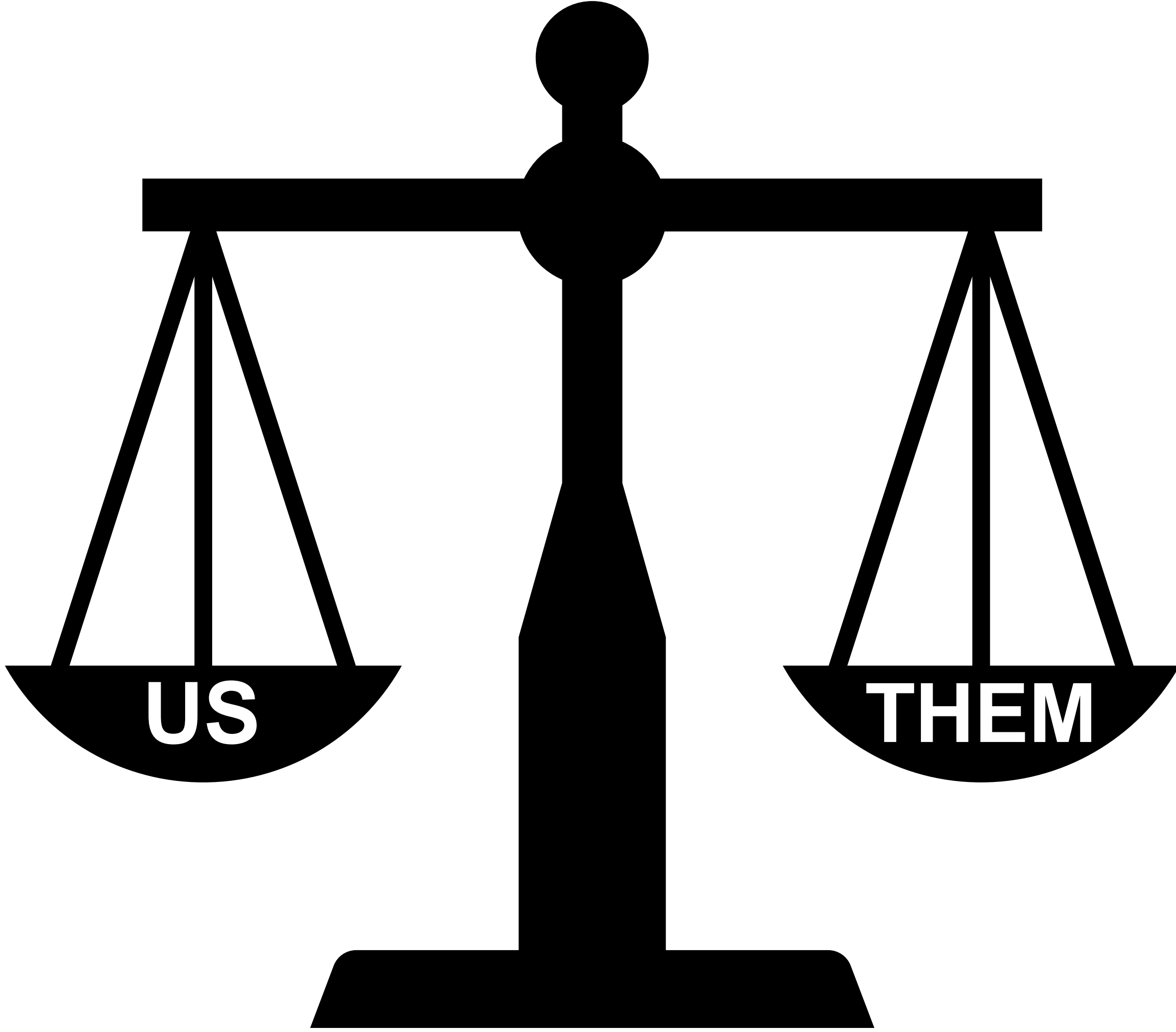
Changes to certification requirements

Increased operating costs and decreased revenue

Changes to client registration and programming platforms

Pre-pandemic projects cancelled, postponed, or altered





US

- Operational needs
- Pressure from the community
- Organization expectations
- Budget limitations
- Diverse community offerings
- Little to no programming cancellations
- Happy, thriving, and well-trained staff

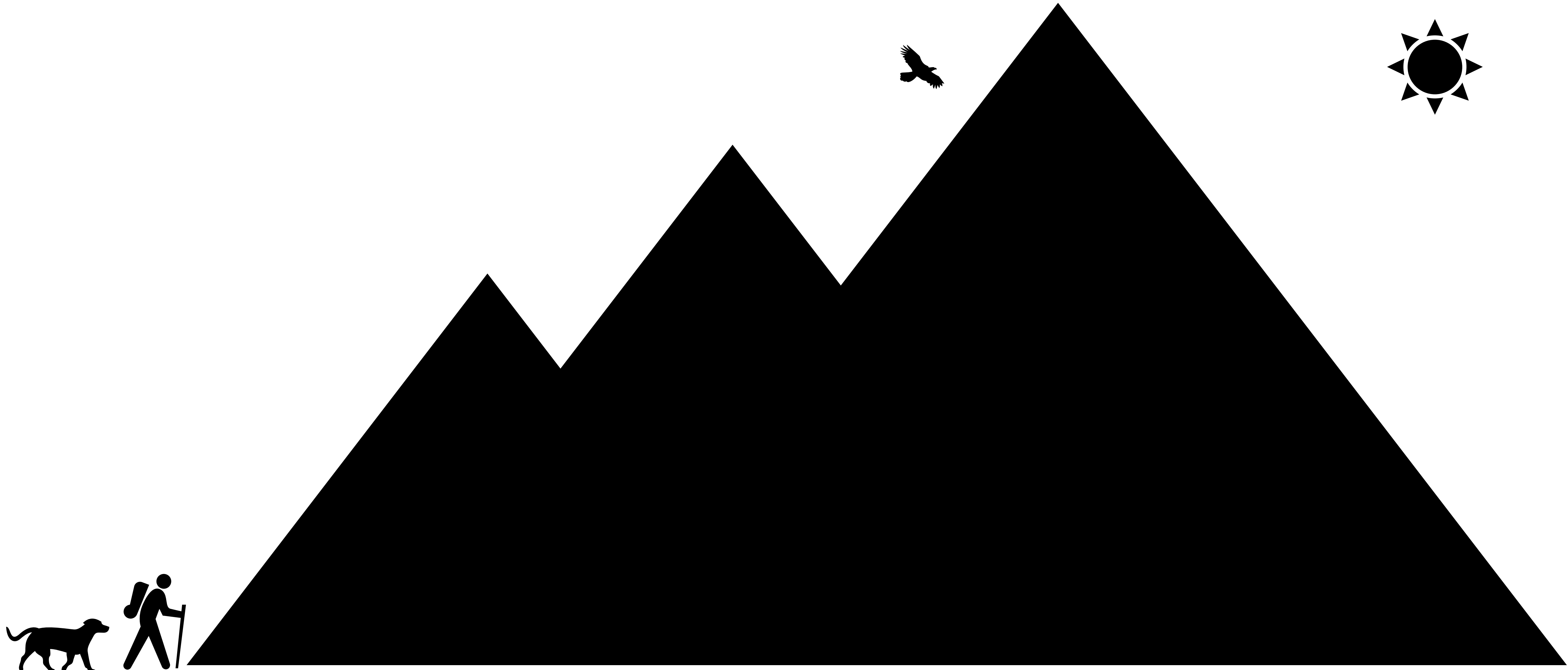
THEM

- Flexibility
- Appreciated and recognized
- Personal expectations
- Connected to the “why”
- Education is priority
- Not afraid of setting work/life balance boundaries
- Happy, thriving, and well-trained supervisors

Mutual Needs

- Smooth and fulfilling operation
- Less customer complaints
- A sense of connection to our work
- Input and ownership over operations
- Happy, healthy, and thriving workplaces
- Acknowledgment of hard work and achievements
- Work/life balance for all levels of staff





You are here

How Can We Change?

1. Establish city-wide, team-wide, non-negotiable, workplace priorities
2. Ensure your team is on the same page
3. Put your oxygen mask on first
4. Create yearly and/or quarterly hiring and training projections
5. Invest in current staff
6. Create succession plans
7. Manage workplace and workflow expectations

1. Establish city-wide, team-wide, non-negotiable, workplace priorities

“Research has shown that when employees set goals, they tend to feel more connected to their organization. This not only makes the workplace a more positive environment but also helps employees perform better” - FORBES Sept 2023

- Helps to determine a sense of direction
- Connects the team to the work by identifying what is expected of them
- Allows the individual to understand their purpose within the organization
- When goals are seamlessly aligned with empowerment, team members can focus their efforts on tasks that matter most, driving efficiency and productivity
- Personal goals + greater organizational purpose = profound sense of ownership
- Understanding how their contributions directly impact organizational success will intrinsically motivate and fuel their commitment and determination.

How Do We Cultivate This Growth?

Establish city-wide, team-wide, non-negotiable, workplace priorities

- Hold monthly team meetings where workplace priorities can be discussed, updated, or altered
- Hold a yearly city-wide team meeting where priorities for the year can be shared and discussed
- Conduct staff surveys to empower feedback and goal-setting
- Normalize staff shout-outs
- Share information where appropriate
- Close loops within teams and city-wide



2. Ensure your team is on the same page

“Leaders have a great responsibility: They need to be able to communicate and work-well with their employees to achieve the desired end results” - FORBES Oct 2016

- True leadership is about value addition: leading by example, earning the trust of your team members, shouldering responsibility of what did not go right, and giving necessary credit when it does
- Things will go wrong. Consider it might be due to poor communication, not the incompetence of your team. Employees won't always know what you are thinking.
- Transparency and open communication with our teams is critical to building organizational community and a culture that resonates with the team
- Place high value on trust and value addition, regardless of “superficial” qualifications or credentials
- Empower your teams to see what they can bring to the table

How Do We Cultivate This Growth?

Ensure your team is on the same page

- Share your thoughts with team members
- See the strengths in others and bring the best out in them
- Do not take for granted that everyone is aligned
- Ask clarifying questions to ensure understanding
- Set attainable and manageable goals to celebrate
- Create a culture of mistake expectance and accountability



3. Put your oxygen mask on first

“Visualize a moment of self-care...chances are, it didn’t take place at work” - Calm Business

- Weaving moments of self-care throughout your day is more beneficial than grinding through a hard day and leaving the “you” time for later
- We spend roughly a third of our lives at work, so shelving self-care for “later” is not sustainable or realistic
- Burnout has become an increasing problem, with extended absences up by 65%
- Having self-care recognized as a priority within your organization can make a huge difference when it comes to building happier, more sustainable workday routines for yourself and your employees.

How Do We Cultivate This Growth?

Put your oxygen mask on first

- Facilitate walking meetings
- Log off and shut down
- Discourage eating at the computer
- Practice what you preach
- Build pauses into the workday
- Set communication time boundaries
- Try to provide flexibility for staff
- Practice gratitude in your words and actions
- Support employees in their mindfulness journeys
- Introduce wellness check-ins
- Be mindful of “compassion fatigue”



4. Create yearly and/or quarterly hiring and training projections

- A proactive forecasting of yearly hirings that coincide with things like:
 - HR timelines
 - Higher program volumes (i.e. summer, Spring Break ext.)
 - Holiday periods (i.e. Christmas.)
 - Predicted hiring committee vacations
- Allows for proactive planning as opposed to reactive hiring
- Lays out expectations and time requirements clearly so hiring tasks can be worked into schedules and operational needs
- Shows a broader scope of how hirings feed into on-boarding requirements, inservice trainings, facility orientations ext.
- Identify a hiring leader, facility support staff, and opportunities to develop the skills of those who wish to learn the process

How Do We Cultivate This Growth?

Create yearly and/or quarterly hiring and training projections

- Sit down with your teams and forecast for when you might/will need staff.
 - Reference previous years data
 - Reference projected program offerings
 - Consider next years hiring budget
 - Consider “peak” times or weeks where there might be holidays and/or vacation time
- Schedule a team meeting with HR to determine their timelines and deadlines
- Plunk as much data as possible onto a spreadsheet
- Work backwards from Aquatic and HR deadlines to determine yearly/quarterly timelines
- Share the “hiring load” by rotating staff quarterly
- Determine an HR representative(s) and an Aquatic hiring lead(s) to act as main point-of-contact for information and updates
- Conduct hiring committee training to ensure consistency and accuracy



5. Invest in Current Staff....but Why?

Improves Productivity - organizations that maintain a high-development culture are more likely to have engaged employees

- Happier employees are more productive
- Production is typically higher-quality
- Higher quality improves the bottom line
- An improved bottom line will improve your reputation and your organization is more likely to thrive
- “Happy employees, happy balance sheet, and happy us”

Attracts Talent - as the reputation of your organization spreads, you will be more likely to attract top-tier talent in your niche

- Can help improve and increase city-wide service offerings

Invest in Current Staff....but wait, there is more!?

“The most common reason for turnover is career issues, a category that includes opportunities for growth, achievement, and security” - Work Institutes 2021 Retention Report

Reduce Employee Turnover

High employee turnover is costly because:

- Forces you to spend more time and money hiring replacement employees
- Facilitates a company culture of “revolving door workers” who do not get invested in their organization
- It taxes your resources
- Employees who need to be trained are not as productive as fully-trained employees
- Lack of “coasting”

Invest in Current Staff....

Bottom Line

1. By reducing employee turnover, you directly contribute to the well-being of your organization by giving it the opportunity and time to flourish
2. If your employees enjoy working for your organization, they will be more likely to stick around over the long haul and become mentors to the next crop of employees who join your team
3. Investing in your staff can benefit you by adding direct, tangible benefits to your services and organization
4. Having a constant staff team reduces negative effects or trends, such as a big wave of employees jumping ship (i.e. where have all our Aquatic professionals gone?!)

How Do We Cultivate This Growth?

Invest in Current Staff

- Ensure your employees have a comfortable workspace that is conducive to productivity
 - Designated staff space?
 - Staff communication board?
 - Clean, working appliances?
 - Purposeful and free of clutter?
 - Mold? Dust? Broken benches ext?
- Increase wages to be in alignment with other direct examples
 - If the money is less or the same, then you need to prove the “why”
- Give opportunities for development and growth through ALL employment levels
 - Do not be a Bank!
- Embrace non-mandatory team building activities
 - Host yearly off-sites, all-hands meetings, and department-wide social events to build camaraderie that supports loyalty and retention
 - Helps your employees feel like they’re part of a larger team.



How Do We Cultivate This Growth?

Invest in Current Staff

- Recognize good performance
 - Your employees are the backbone of your organization
 - Don't let them toil away without acknowledgement of their achievements
- Listen to employee feedback
 - When an employee discusses a potential career change or a job opportunity outside your organization, ensure their voice is heard and supported, not dismissed
- Listening to why employees want to leave, and providing thoughtful recommendations about whether they should stay or go, can foster connection to their existing workplace
- An exiting employee might provide insight into growth areas for the organization
- Shows employees care for their career journeys and investment in their growth and satisfaction



6. Create Succession Plans

Gartner's Global Research and Advisory firm survey - January 2020

- More than a third of organizational leaders said they find it difficult to develop effective senior leaders
- 45% reported that they struggle to develop good mid-level employees
- 50% of those surveyed said they are prepared to lead their organization in the future
- The average cost of a new hire is about \$4000 (2023)
- It can take anywhere from 45 to 70 days to fill a position
- It can take up to 45 to 60 days for a new hire to complete basic training and another year to be fully productive within a team

Create Succession Plans

“A leaders lasting value is measured by succession” - John C. Maxwell

- Reduces negative impact of sudden leadership changes
- Provides opportunity to identify potential leaders
- Easier to get organizational and shareholder support
- Minimizes miscommunication and chaos
- Helps preserve knowledge and expertise
- Working knowledge of policies, procedures, processes, culture ext.
- Already considered a “member of the team”
- Dedication and engagement within your organization/new perspectives and knowledge to share

How Do We Cultivate This Growth?

Four Stages of Succession Planning

1. Assessment and Identification:

- Assessment of current and future talent needs of the organization
- Identifying key positions and evaluating potential successors

2. Development and Preparation:

- Focus on developing and preparing potential successors through training, mentoring, and developmental opportunities
- Ensures easier assimilation into key positions
- Organization interview preparation



How Do We Cultivate This Growth?

Four Stages of Succession Planning

3. Selection and Transition:

- Potential successor is selected and a transition plan is developed to ensure a smooth handover of responsibilities from the incumbent

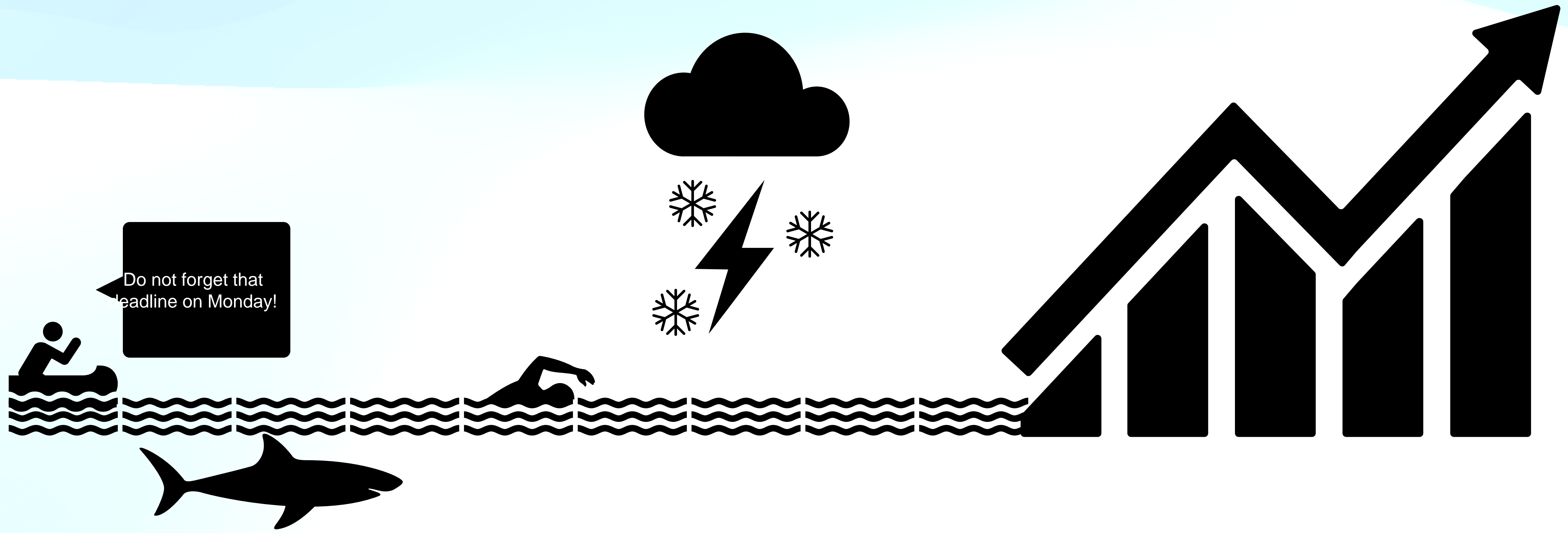
4. Evaluation and Feedback:

- Involves evaluating the effectiveness of the succession planning process by collecting feedback from key stakeholders and making adjustments to the process as necessary



7. Manage Workplace and Workflow Expectations

“People today are under intense pressure to be (ideal workers)—totally committed to their jobs and always on call. But after interviewing hundreds of professionals in many fields, the conclusion is that selfless dedication to work is often unnecessary and harmful. It has dysfunctional consequences not only for individuals but also for their organizations” - Harvard Business Review



Manage Workplace and Workflow Expectations

People must choose to prioritize their jobs ahead of other parts of their lives to be considered an ideal worker

- Role as parents (actual, anticipated, dog, plant ext), their personal needs, health, vacation ext.

Despite well-documented personal and physical costs of work prioritization, an overwhelming number of people believe that achieving success *requires* that they conform to this ideal.

- Sometimes causes employees to resist well-planned organizational improvements

Most employees find it difficult to stifle aspects of themselves and focus single-mindedly on work

- May grapple painfully with how to manage other parts of their lives.
- Solutions may help to navigate the stresses, but will often suffer serious and dysfunctional consequences.

How Do We Cultivate This Growth?

Manage workplace flow and expectations

- Ask questions:
 - Is it beneficial to weave ideal-worker expectations into an organizational culture?
 - Is it necessary, at an individual level, to meet those expectations?
- Develop your own multifaceted identity
- Minimize time-based rewards
- Protect employees personal lives
- Respect boundaries
- Consider the coping strategies (accepting, passing, revealing.)



Manage Workplace and Workflow Expectations

Accepting: conforming to the demands of a high-pressure workplace (43%)

- Prioritize work identities and sacrifice (or significantly suppress) meaningful aspects of who they are in their quest to succeed on the job
- Tend to give up being civically engaged or getting deeply involved in their family lives

Passing: quietly finding ways around the norm (27%)

- Devote time to non-work activities but under the organization's radar
- Pay a psychological price for hiding parts of themselves from their colleagues, superiors, and subordinates

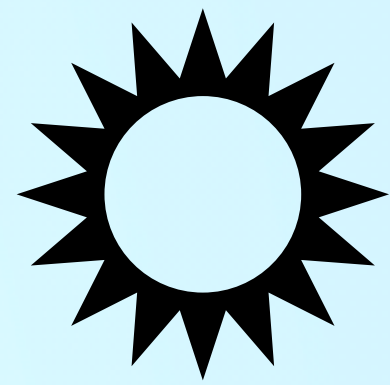
Revealing: openly sharing parts of their lives and asking for changes to the workplace structure (30%)

- Often have the worst performance records
- Can be resentful and/or leave organization to find a “better fit”

How Do We Cultivate This Growth?

Manage workplace flow and expectations

Strategy:	Response:	Motivation:	Risks:	Growth Ideas:
ACCEPTING	<p>Rapid Engagement: You always reply and, if requested, complete work (e.g., “I’ll have it for you in five minutes”).</p> <p>You rarely make evening plans.</p>	You devote yourself completely to work because it is expected and rewarded	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You may burn out or be slow to rebound from setbacks You may have trouble mentoring others and/or creating a pipeline of promotable employees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set aside blocks of time for other aspects of your life Do not expect subordinates to make work their highest priority Be open to different ways of working
PASSING	<p>Feigned Attentiveness: You respond and give the impression that you are working (e.g., “Am on it—will take a few hours”)</p> <p>You tend to make and keep evening plans but rarely mention them</p>	You seek to protect your career while sustaining other aspects of your life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You may not build close relationships at work You may perpetuate the ideal-worker myth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connect with selected colleagues so you feel better known Make it clear that outside activities do not hurt your performance
REVEALING	<p>Next-Day Follow-Up: Unless it’s urgent, you do not alter your plans (e.g., “At a show—will get to this tomorrow”)</p> <p>You may not even respond that evening.</p>	You wish to be open in your relationships and believe the organization may need to change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You may damage your career relationships You may sacrifice the credibility needed to push for change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasize results, not effort, when discussing work Encourage others to be open about their behaviour and thus change workplace norms



Task #1: Identify one hiring strategy and/or tool to take back to your organization and implement

Task #2: Identify one retention strategy and/or tool to take back to your organization and implement

Task #3: Identify one or two staff that would benefit from development for the purposes of succession

Task #4: Identify one workplace self-care strategy that you can implement today

Task #5: Identify which coping strategy resonates with you. What areas of growth do you plan to work towards?



Thank
You!



Text

Email: performanceh2obc@gmail.com
Instagram: [vanessaderh20](https://www.instagram.com/vanessaderh20)

#GetWaterStrong