

With the publication of Art Kleiner's recent book **Who Really Matters**, The Core Group Theory of Power, Privilege and Success, Art shows that a "core group" isn't just the people at the top of the hierarchy; it is that group of people in any company whose interests and priorities are taken into account by people who make decisions. **For more on core groups ([click here](http://www.workecology.com/thoughtleadership.html)) (<http://www.workecology.com/thoughtleadership.html> - new link)**

Portfolio Workers: The Core Group Talent Pool

"The concern of my work is the relation we each have with ourselves, with others, and with the world around us. In painting, photography, facilitation, and collaborative activity, I explore the spectrum between strong presence and shrinking invisibility; voices of all kinds – loud, forceful, still, receptive, excited, playful, watchful, and wise – take form in color, in texture, and can manifest as constructive compliments within group dynamics. I see the way we interact with art, nature, and each other as systemic loops of engagement and as opportunity for visual and verbal conversations, where inquiry can readily open around the relationship of neighboring, yet disparate, parts."

- Kelvy Bird, <http://www.kelvybird.com>

"What makes a core group great?" The *simple answer* to this question, "what makes a core group great," *is great people?* . We all know great people and we all know great people who have failed at work and should not have. What I have learned in recent months is that a critical factor contributing to great core groups is their ability to work with people of different kinds of intelligence, who have achieved a kind of accomplishment that is not familiar to members of the core group.

Typically these type of workers are drawn to affinity groups outside of the institution where they work to learn, master an expertise or spark innovation. This is an essential ingredient for building trust with a talented worker.

Factoring in this thinking is what will make or break an HR Group's performance. Workforce development – recruitment, education and performance systems will become best practice if this thinking integrates into the practice of your HR Group.

This article focuses on this thinking as it relates to a new method of HR Recruitment for attracting and building your organization effectiveness by recruiting a new breed of worker, ***the portfolio worker***.

The first theorist that profiled and defined "***the portfolio worker***" was Charles Handy in his book, **The Age of Unreason**, © 1991. Portfolio workers are life-long learners, who accumulate knowledge and leverage their work through the expertise gained by working with others cross discipline and science. You meet portfolio workers through the actual exercise of work and learning.

The portfolio worker has a story to tell that helps a core group member or recruiter understand and quantify a match between a portfolio worker and an employer need. This matching process goes beyond the concept of a job description that describes a job that is a repeatable exercise and does not invite the professional to contribute intelligence and cooperate in shared learning. Within the story are invisible factors that directly contribute to this type of worker's capacity to contribute to intangible and tangible assets in the context of cross functional or high performance work teams, with work practices that demand continuously learning and contribution to affinity groups intelligent work output.

Many of these intelligent workers are turning to the web to describe their story and catalogue their accomplishments that concretely describe their direct contribution to asset development when working as part of a team or affinity group that results in learning new practices and generating knowledge and assets.

Kelvy Bird's website, www.kelvybird.com, exemplifies the value of her portfolio where she has structured a website that powerfully communicates such a story. At this website you can view Kelvy's accomplishments, a catalogue of her work and learn more about what kinds of people she has affinity for --- how she learns with them and what she had done directly to contribute to projects with them. Through aesthetics, art and written text this site conveys Kelvy's story far more powerfully than any resume or cover letter.

- **Does your recruitment process in HR uncover such people?**
- **What can you learn from the portfolio workers story as an HR and how?**

Here is a case in point of a portfolio worker story:

Paul Adams, Director of Software Application Development for Publishers Circulation Fulfillment, <http://www.pfc Corp.com> (PCFCorp) began building his portfolio of work in the mid 80's with the introduction of data base software. At that time, community newspaper distributors did not have access to computerized records to maintain accurate subscription details for newspaper delivery.

As a manager for Community News Dealers, a spin-off circulation/fulfillment company of the Boston Globe, Paul managed the delivery of newspapers for the Boston Globe, throughout Massachusetts. Home at night on his own time, Paul became fascinated with the personal computer and the potential of data base software and convinced his manager to let him design a system that reduced newspaper circulation errors by 50%.

Through a number of organizational changes and the development of a growing circulation system for a network of national newspapers, e.g. the Boston Globe and New York Times, Paul's has continuously improved and has added value to the system he authored for Community Newspaper Dealers for the Boston Globe, which was acquired by PCFCorp and grown to serve 40 clients.

After the acquisition of Community Newspaper Dealers by PCFCorp, Changes external and internal to PCFCorp.com grew from a new daily reality of what it means to produce a daily printed newspaper impacted by geographical dispersion, integration of the Internet and increased company size (client base, revenue and geography). This has added a great deal of complexity to Paul's scope of responsibility and his ability to be proactive in an industry that is no longer operated with geographical limitations for delivery and has integrated operations with web based technology.

When Paul first started development of his portfolio, gaining agreement and cooperation was a matter of driving a few miles down and going out for a beer. Now on a daily basis he is dealing with hundreds of people he does not know and a core group 100's of miles away from his office where it is difficult to get someone on the phone or schedule a meeting to gain their full attention

Paul continues to be change responsive. He has built his network into an affinity group of resource across his client base on behalf of his core group. At the beginning of his career, Paul could solve a problem by

himself by going home at night and teaching himself how to program Lotus 1-2-3. Now Paul has to reach out to representatives of 40 newspapers to integrate their needs into solutions.

Paul can no longer duplicate his success of the past by reducing circulation errors for one newspaper by 50%. For 40 clients that PCFCorp provides home delivery for this is far more complicated and cannot rely on methods, procedures, software applications and techniques of the past.

- **Would PCFCorp.com have recruited Paul through an ad in the paper?**
- **What competencies has Paul grown from this experience?**
- **What is it that Paul's core group might observe about his performance?**

How would Paul answer these questions?

- First, Paul saw the possibility of personal computing and saw the opportunity to take a vision and make it a concrete reality by designing a system of circulation that decreased errors and increased quality of performance.
- Paul did not wait for someone else (company or individual) to prove it as a case study to use for arguing for resource.
- His enthusiasm and performance won the trust of people in a local situation to build a performance reputation as a troubleshooter and practiced expert in a field where he had no education;
- The value creation that Paul sparks is through his leadership capacity and his ability to author results in the context of organically formed work groups he has sparked across company and client boundaries.
- Paul uses his natural ability as a leader to create live action change through what how he performs his job and leads others. He responds on behalf of his core group to constant change by forming new strategies of how to work with others within his social network and in many cases with people he does not know.

Paul Adams is an example of a best practice portfolio worker, whose work integrates well with his Core Group Mission for effectiveness and has not waited for direction from a hierarchy of delegation to lead initiatives that make his company more effective. While Paul's story may be invisible to his core group, it may be implied in the trust and respect extended to him to do his job and do it well.

In the context an HR Recruitment initiative to integrate portfolio worker's as a method of organization practice and effectiveness, core group will need to foster a dialogue as part of a recruitment and performance review process to uncover the story of an accomplished worker's portfolio. ***Does your HR recruitment and performance system do that?***

The core groups that lead companies with the greatest success are going to be core groups that work with portfolio workers outside of traditional forms of recruitment and performance review. These are leaders know they can't know everything and have learned to lead and hire portfolio workers drawn from social networks that form to learn, innovate and credential expertise.

These leaders and workers give serious attention to building trust. They know that trust building between a core group leaders and portfolio workers is not an exercise of managing the details of how work is performed. It is about measuring intangible and tangible assets forecasted against expenses. A core group leader may never know how a product was designed or produced and they will know how to measure that the product satisfies all stakeholders involved in the production, use or impact of the products use, even when that product is knowledge or service.

Without trust and employing people who can show their accomplishments, Core Groups can not lead for high performance. Leading for high performance does not mean knowing how results were produced; leading for high performance involves building a dialogue of understanding that insures quality production and motivates people to give their best built contribution toward delivering a quality result.

Leading a change in recruitment that serves identification and integration of the Portfolio Intelligent Worker is what will contribute to making a core group a great core group that leads an intelligent and effective workforce.

For the latest on Core Group Theory and its associated practices go to:

www.workecology.com

About the Author



Lavinia Weissman, Author, Capacity Builder and Leadership Coach.



Lavinia is a self-generative learner and collaborator. As a capacity builder and leadership coach, Lavinia mentors teams of people and leaders to the accomplishment of goals, measurements, and objectives and effective leadership of interdisciplinary teams.

Lavinia's enthusiasm for Core Group Theory as it fits with her own practice has grown out of extensive research by asking "What could we put in place to help organizations engineer the kind of core groups that could really make them work and how can we actually be much more deliberate about the kinds of core groups we engender? And if we could, would that make us more powerful?" And Lavinia's saying, "Yeah, you bet it would." And that's her work.