



Association of Canadian Search,
Employment and Staffing Services

Association Nationale des Entreprises en
Recrutement et Placement de Personnel



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ACSESS AGM May 2009

President's Address – Steve Jones

Twenty-six years ago when I began my career in the staffing industry, there were two predominate themes that characterized the business.

First, the most successful companies were fantastic at marketing, selling, advertising, branding and connecting with customers. These companies cultivated the most orders and they were the winners in a tremendously competitive industry.

Second, a small number of agencies, a small percentage of the suppliers, at that time mostly perm placement agencies, created an image problem for the vast majority of the industry. These companies created concerns over ethics, integrity and honesty due to internal business practices. The rouse, bait and switch, scooping and raiding were unscrupulous business practices casting a shadow over our industry.

The newspapers regularly reported the allegations made by Alan Borovoy of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association. He was the self appointed industry watchdog who taped recorded telephone conversations where he personally attempted to entrap unwitting employment agencies into accepting discriminatory job orders. He alleged that we henchmen were doing the discriminatory human rights dirty work for unscrupulous customers.

Fast forward over a quarter of a century. Our rapidly advancing industry sports some of the most advanced technology tools and business initiatives. Job boards, internet marketing, search engine optimization, applicant tracking systems, vendor management systems, on-line back-ground verifications, international terrorist screening, predictive profiling, web-enabled assessment tools, master vendor arrangements, strategic procurement initiatives, Arriba reverse auctioning, biometric time and attendance systems, workforce transfers. The advances and changes in our professionalism and sophistication have been extraordinary!

But, regardless of the change that surrounds us, two key predominate themes characterizing the staffing industry remain.

First, the most successful companies are fantastic at marketing, selling, advertising, branding and connecting with customers. These companies cultivating the most orders are the winners in our tremendously competitive industry.

Second, a small number of firms, a small percentage of the suppliers, create an image problem for the vast majority of the industry. The companies attracting attention today are the temporary staffing services.

The Workers Action Centre of today is the equivalent of Alan Borovoy circa 1983. Instead of allegations of discriminatory recruitment, the issues and allegations of 2009 are pointing toward health and safety, employment standards, treatment of temporary foreign workers, fair pay and protection of vulnerable workers.

Media loves a sad story.....

Even though there are very few real newsworthy stories about our industry, the media finds ways to fill their pages, re-hashing stories about candidate fees, false advertising, low wages and exploitation of vulnerable workers. This week in the news, labour unions and advocacy groups make new allegations that businesses are targeting women on maternity leave, using the recession as a false excuse to deny them their legal return to work. Believe it if you may but personally – I don't!

What we see and read so frequently, the stories, allegations, the impressions; perpetuated through the media, are not close to the truth! We live in a different reality. Our reality is not the story that the media likes to tell.

As individual business owners, managers and as an industry, we have failed to inform the world of our reality. We have somehow managed to keep the truth hidden from public view. We have not been effective in allowing governments and the public to know the value we deliver, the difference we make, our contributions and our responsibilities.

This is our reality,

- We are the single largest employment pipeline for job seekers, job changers, up graders, new immigrants, new entrants, students and career changers.
- Last year, our industry enabled hundreds of thousands of Canadians with the opportunity of full time careers, contract work and temporary employment.
- We make the process of job finding, job changing and upgrading easier, quicker and more effective. When a candidate makes one contact with a staffing company they enhance their network through us, to our clients and employers by dozens – even hundreds.
- We can take credit for removing barriers that job seekers might otherwise experience. We create and provide access to employment opportunities giving people the dignity and respect that they deserve.
- We lead all industries in foreign skill assessment and recognition of foreign experience.
- We are the buffer between unsuspecting workers and unsafe workplaces. Our safety programs, education, communication, worksite inspection and operational standards ensure that workers are assigned to safe work environments. We play a vital role in the reduction of workplace lost time injuries, illnesses and fatalities. For example, empirical data in Ontario proved that we lead all industry groups in the reduction of lost time injuries.
- We help people and businesses to make the right fit, enhancing productivity, improving employment longevity while contributing to employee satisfaction.
- We are an ombudsman, agent and filter between employers and potential future employees. We protect their rights and help them achieve their career objectives.
- We provide income and income security for people who need it the most. When a man or woman needs income for a sort term to pay rent, or feed a child then temporary help will provide a lifeline for a day, a week or a month.
- We help doctors, nurses, lawyers, engineers, IT professionals, accountants, administrators, drivers and labourers. We help executives and students, new immigrants, return to work moms, injured workers and the semi-retired. Every Canadian has the opportunity to benefit from our services.
- Every day, we make a meaningful difference in the lives of the people we serve. Simply put, we help people! We give people dignity. We contribute to their happiness while we deliver the right people that employers need to succeed.

LET'S TAKE SOME PERSPECTIVE

Last year GM was in the news almost every week. At the peak of the GM glory days, a decade ago, GM employed over 30,000 workers, last year they employed approximately 15,000 and if they survive, analysts project that GM Canada will employ 6000 Canadians in the year 2012.

Contrast the newsworthiness of GM's 6000 workers to the Canadian staffing industry. Last year we did not employ 6000, not 60,000 – but we did employ 600,000 Canadians. 100 times more than General Motors. – but we failed to tell that story. It is a great story! A success story! A newsworthy story!

I know I am preaching to the choir. But it is the choir that will play an important role in how we are viewed in the future. You, the choir, will play a critical role in our industry's future success.

BECOME A STORY TELLER!

Tell people your story. Tell it with passion and focus. Propagate the truth. Be a player in taking away the misinformation and replacing it with a story about our success, our value and people. Recognize who has motive to hurt the industry. Have the courage to stand up to them. Some politicians will cast blame during periods of high unemployment, unions will look for ways to protect their legacy, and social advocacy groups know that extraordinary allegations will get more attention to their cause. The extreme left will oppose most businesses if they risk making a profit. One side of a story is rarely an accurate reflection. Tell your story too. Create balance, give people reason to question, ask and decide. We need to be better story tellers.

ACSESS is committed to being a better story teller on your behalf. Our focus on public relations and communication is on the top of our priority list. We can do this with your support.

WHAT ELSE CAN YOU DO?

- Report ethical and legal violations.
- Get more involved.
- Pursue your CPC designation

- Encourage your employees and co-workers to engage in chapter and committee activities
- Teach, share and inform
- Write blogs, letters and Tweets
- Get involved with politics
- Meet your local MLA, MPP, and MP – Tell them your story.
- Stand up for honesty, integrity, professionalism.
- Become an unabashed and shameless promoter of your story, of your truth

I am proud to be a friend to so many industry colleagues. I am proud of what we do. I am especially proud to be the President of ACSESS because of all that ACSESS does and all we represent. I know that we share this pride. So please, go out and tell the world your proud story. You deserve the recognition.