

Heart at Work:

**How the people of Pt. Lepreau Nuclear Generating Station
are transforming their work culture for stronger performance and greater fulfillment**

by

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One of the challenges that all nuclear plants face today is the challenge of change. Strong and safe performance one year is no guarantee for the future. Approaches which have worked in the past provide little future certainty in this era of global competition and deregulation.

Pt. Lepreau Nuclear Generating Station was, at one time, recognized as a world-class plant. After a few years (recently) of less-than-stellar performance, the people and the leaders of Pt. Lepreau are taking action in several ways to bring the plant again to a world-class level of performance. They desire to make Pt. Lepreau a better place to work than ever before.

There is both tangible and intangible evidence of Pt. Lepreau's progress. This paper will provide specific examples of that progress.

Along with the examples of progress, there is a renewed sense of vigor at the plant to *achieve again together*. This sprang from a meeting of Pt. Lepreau leaders in mid-1998 where leaders talked of what they wanted for the future of Pt. Lepreau and its people. Eventually, with the input of more employees, those ideas were forged into a four-part Vision for the future which is guiding strategic decisions and daily actions.

The desire to move forward led to an exploration of what was currently missing if the plant was to attain the higher standards of "world-class performance." People at the plant spoke openly about ways they wanted to focus on producing real quality in their daily work.

This led to the creation of a picture --- a metaphor really --- for the many areas of work that would need to be addressed before major improvements would be accomplished. That picture is of a *house under construction*.

The various sections of the "house" symbolize areas of work, knowledge, or skill to be "built" for the new high performance culture to take hold. (The features are not peculiar to any single plant. They represent essential elements common to most high performance organizations which thrive in the long term.)

This paper will describe in some detail the approach used over the last 18 months at Pt. Lepreau in building two of the three major sections of the high performance "house": 1. the *foundation* (Understanding of Quality and Interpersonal Skills) and 2. the *roof* structure (Vision, Values, Mission, Objectives). Work on the third portion of the "house" 3. the *walls* ---the Processes, Practices, and Procedures--- is still ongoing at this time. That may be the topic of a future paper by the Transition Team leading that portion of the effort.

A mere description of "what we did" at Pt. Lepreau might lead the reader to believe that there is some *list of specific tasks* that anyone could follow like a recipe to create cultural change. Most of us know that life is not so simple!

The authors believe that it is not just doing external tasks like writing a Vision document or placing people in an Interpersonal Skills course that causes people to *engage differently and more effectively* with their work, their peers, their co-workers, their customers and suppliers. People start interacting with others differently – more effectively – only if they themselves *become* different on the inside. Such an internal change is something which *begins with an experience, an awareness, or knowledge* which provides a *new insight* into life and work. That new insight creates the possibility of a *change of heart* which affect a person's choices and future behavior. With a change of heart one literally sees the world differently --- and therefore acts differently than before.

When a person has an experience that reveals to him/her the power of his/her own choices to change, it can be an exciting and empowering time. *Experiential learning* is a powerful tool for preparing adults to deal effectively in a changing work environment. Unlike traditional lecture formats, this method allows people a chance to explore and see “from the inside-out” about their own effective (and ineffective) attitudes and behaviors at work and home. They *teach themselves* from the insights they gain.

At Pt. Lepreau, we used experiential learning for the “house foundation” of Understanding Quality and developing stronger Interpersonal Skills. Both of these pieces were and are crucial to creating the *new culture* back at work – one in which most employees can see that *significant change and improvement* are not just possible, but even desirable.

Leaders, managers, Human Performance experts, and all people who work in the nuclear industry have a common goal: to see our plants and their support organizations performing safely and effectively – producing power – for the benefit of employees, customers, and owners. To fulfill that goal, we must all become more aware of new aspects of Human Performance.

This will require of us all an expansion of our thinking. It's not just about Ergonomic and Cognitive issues anymore. It's not only about preventing mistakes, mishaps, errors, or miscommunication. That was just the beginning. The next part of the equation is to open ourselves as leaders to additional fields of knowledge ---like psychology, systems thinking, statistical variation, and how people learn --- so that we can remove the barriers which now prevent people from contributing fully. The experiential learning atmosphere can be structured, as it was at Pt. Lepreau, to provide an opportunity for people to voice what needs to work better so leaders can respond.

We need to keep on trying to make room for people to bring not only their heads and hands, but also their passion for excellence to work each day. Then we'll achieve the improvement, the bottom-line results, the joy in work, and sense of fulfillment that are natural outcomes when people are encouraged to show up with “heart at work.”