

## REFLECTIONS BY LIZ: A GREAT WORKPLACE—DOES IT MATTER?

In my salon last week, [Guy Vaillancourt, President of Woodard & Curran](#), a 500-person environmental, engineering, and operations company, spoke about the emphasis Woodard & Curran has on creating a great workplace for its employees and what that means. Guy said that the focus on a workplace where people could thrive started with their founders—Al Curran and Frank Woodard. The company's mission identifies creating a gratifying workplace for employees as its key business goal and core value, and the corporate culture supports that goal. Aspects of that culture include mutual respect, freedom to pursue work and personal interests, treating people as mature adults, and creating new opportunities for everyone. The culture is expressed in their policies and organization—from their lack of rules and bureaucracy to their innovative salary structure. It is seen daily in their office in the form of dogs, hard work and fun, camaraderie, teamwork, and a sense of strong community.

*So, does it matter?* Guy sees a great workplace as their most valuable business strategy. Their turnover is low; their growth consistently strong; they are able to attract and retain smart people; and they are very entrepreneurial. It comes from committed and satisfied people. The guests at the salon also saw it as tremendously appealing—wouldn't we all want a workplace like this? *Does it matter to their clients?* Guy thought so. If you're committed to your workplace, you can focus externally on the clients—not internally on office politics. Clients benefit from the stability, freedom, opportunity, engagement, and empowerment. We at the salon thought so as well. As Thom Neff remarked to Guy, "In the last ten years I haven't heard such a refreshing management approach from any firm in our industry."

Guy's talk concludes our salon series on "The Changing Faces of Leadership." Thank you for your participation. If you missed any of the programs, the speaker statements and my other reflections are also available on the web. Have a lovely spring and please keep in touch!

