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## **Tapping into creative workers**

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Creativity and innovation. No one would argue their value in business, especially in today's fast-changing global marketplace. But too often they sit on a pedestal, supported with the assumption that only a select few can come up with breakthrough thinking.

If we believe the assumption, here's the dilemma. How can business possibly compete in an unpredictable environment where creativity and innovation are the new core competencies – and where we depend on much of our workforce to exhibit them?

We have several answers. The first comes out of an October 30 corporate creativity event that the Arts & Business Council of Greater Philadelphia presented in partnership with Towers Perrin. The keynote speaker was Sir Ken Robinson, a world-renown leader in creativity and human resource development, who quickly debunked some myths. Point one: Everyone has the potential for creativity, not necessarily in a general way but in a specialized area. Point two: No general test exists to measure creativity. It can only be brought out through an entire organization enthused about creativity, rewarding it and encouraging risk-taking and brainstorming; and through multi-disciplinary teams of specialists exchanging ideas.

Most companies worldwide are not tapping into the potential power of their employees, according to Towers Perrin's just released 2007 Global Workforce Study. In this the largest polling study of its kind, the Towers Perrin data shows that a majority of employees don't think their organizations or their senior management are doing enough to help them become fully engaged and contribute to their companies' success. In other words, we have an "engagement gap" that's quite wide. The actual numbers are an eye-opener. Only 21% of employees surveyed are willing to go the extra mile to help their companies succeed, and another 38% are only partly engaged. Not surprisingly, the study also found that high levels of engagement led to better financial results and higher retention of valued employees.

What can be done? We need to recognize that just when companies are looking for every source of competitive advantage, the workforce itself represents the largest reservoir of untapped potential. We need to focus on the many ways to build innovation and creativity into corporate culture. And we need to keep the conversation going in and among our regional businesses.

At Towers Perrin we will continue to push the dialogue, in part through a groundbreaking local study much like the recent global one. We anticipate we'll report similar findings – as well as uncover some best practices and new ideas being developed and implemented here.

At the Arts & Business Council we also will take the lead. We'll continue to develop innovation in business professionals – through placement in enriching, skills-building arts and cultural environments that need creative solutions and provide fertile ground for growing imaginative thinking; by bringing the concept of arts-based learning to the workplace; and by building a stimulating, dynamic cultural community that is a magnet for creative business people.

If you haven't done so already, we urge you tap into talent that's most likely right in your midst. No one way will be the key. But together we can discover the possibilities.