



Letter *from* the Editor

BY ALBERT J. MILLS

This fall saw the 38th annual conference of the Atlantic Schools of Business (ASB), held in St. John's (NF) from October 17-19. The Business School of Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN) hosted the conference. In its thirty-eight year history, the conference has showcased new, developing, and cutting-edge research by faculty from the Atlantic region's thirteen business schools. In this issue of the Workplace Review, we highlight two of the many papers from the conference. The third article is by a regular contributor to ASB conferences – Karen Blotnicky.

Karen Blotnicky, consultant and marketing professor at Mount Saint Vincent University, opens the issue by asking the question of whether a marketing orientation is important for business success. To find out, Professor Blotnicky surveyed a selection of Atlantic Canada's top firms. Her surprising results go against defined wisdom in finding that successful firms in the region are not market-oriented. It is a finding that should give management practitioners and educators alike something to think about.

The two papers adapted from the 2008 ASB conference share a common theme of sensemaking that owes much to Karl Weick's social-psychological studies of work and organizational crisis. In the first of the two articles, Daphne Rixon (professor of accounting at Saint Mary's University) and Mary Furey (information systems professor at M.U.N.) examine the breakdown in sensemaking systems that led to a fire at Bell Alliant's main operations in St. John's (NF). In the second article, Bill Murray (who teaches Hospitality and Tourism at NBCC in St. Andrews) and Jean Helms Mills (Professor of Management at SMU), look at how people make sense of call centre work in a closely monitored environment.

What we learn from all three articles is that it is important to develop organizational processes from reviewing and, where necessary, critiquing received wisdom. Thus, in terms of business success, the link with marketing strategies and orientation may need a closer look, and suggests that much needed resources may, to a certain extent, be diverted from marketing to other aspects of product development and sale. The Bell Alliant Case builds on a growing literature that argues that strong organizational cultures can also contribute to failure as well as organizational success. Failure and organizational crisis can result from organizational cultures that strongly influence one way of thinking (e.g., success; one best way of doing things) to the detriment of other considerations (e.g., potential failures; change, and different ways of doing things). In the final article, we are reminded that at the base of the successful call centre model of organization are people – not simply human resources, but human beings with emotions and needs, sensemakers who try to reconcile work and identity. ○—