

**Leslie Meingast,  
president and CEO  
of The Personnel  
Department**

**Opposite:  
The Personnel  
Department's  
Vancouver team**

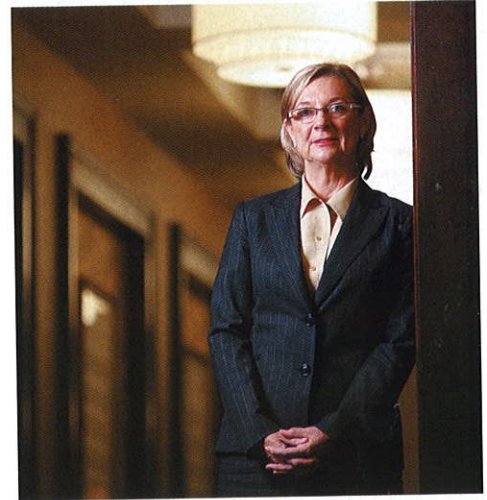




# LEADING BY EXAMPLE



SHE BRINGS HOPE TO THE UNEMPLOYED, SELF-WORTH TO THE EMPLOYED AND ACTIVELY PROMOTES WORKPLACE DIVERSITY – MEET LESLIE MEINGAST, PRESIDENT AND CEO OF THE PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT



**S**URVIVING 30 YEARS, multiple recessions and a rapidly changing business environment is a feat for any company, but in the competitive industry of HR solutions that accomplishment takes on even greater proportions. And yet The Personnel Department, a global staffing and recruiting company anchored in Vancouver, has done just that, exceeding everyone's expectations except its own.

While The Personnel Department's success could easily be measured by growth charts and bottom lines, the achievement that president and CEO Leslie Meingast looks on with most pride is that of consistently ranking as one of the top employers in B.C., nationwide and in the U.S. state of Oregon. "It shows what we already know – that we are a world-class employer," says Meingast. "And it's validation that we really do practice what we preach, and yes, we are qualified to assist other organizations because we know what to do and how to do it."

Starting out at 26 with just \$25,000, Meingast helped found The Personnel Department in 1980, later taking the helm as CEO in 1997. "The vision from the very beginning was grounded in the name: to be organizations' personnel departments or to be extensions of them," says Meingast. Mission accomplished. Today, The Personnel Department has developed its long-successful "managed HR" services into a holistic program of services covering everything from contingent labour and project management to executive recruitment and immigration consulting.

## THE COLLABORATOR

With 892 affiliations in 407 communities across Canada, the company's *JobsInCanada.ca* network is the largest private affiliation network in the country and represents 38 per cent of the national market. The Personnel Department has also partnered with affiliates internationally, extending its reach as far as Australia, New Zealand,

**"What makes Leslie a great leader is her ability to listen to people and mentor them to success. That's always what makes a great leader: someone who can help other people achieve success and through that achieve their own success."**

– Marla Kott, CEO, Imprint Plus

China, Japan and Israel, as well as throughout the U.S. "These are localized, high-quality organizations that have their pulse on the local market," says Meingast. "And we're very stringent in vetting affiliations because we want to be consistent across the board in how we deliver our services."

That consistency comes from a top-down approach, with the company's emphasis on collaboration, networking and relationship-building being a direct reflection of Meingast's unique brand of leadership. "I've moved out of the military hierarchical structure and into the way of the future, because collaborating and networking is the way of the future," she says.

## THE GURU

"She's built a real can-do attitude in her company," agrees David Coe, TEC chair and mentor to Meingast. "Her executives are no-nonsense, positive thinkers, and I can see their respect for her as a leader." Yet Meingast's greatest leadership quality, says Coe, is her drive for personal and professional development. "She seeks out continuous learning, looking for ways to always be on top of her game."

And it is her commitment to career growth that has fostered a culture of constant personal development throughout the company. "They're always promoting >

## THE PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT

from within and putting people into professional development programs so they can get a promotion," says Mike Gardner, CEO of Recombo Inc. "They try to keep their employees a long time and the only way to do that in such a competitive field as recruiting is to be continuously developing people."

"Our forte is connecting and keeping the right people with the right companies, including our own," says Meingast. Inspired by Meingast herself, the company sends flowers to every candidate placed into a permanent position on their first day of work and a follow-up phone call to both candidate and client a few days later. "Leslie, as a person, would send you flowers on your first day and call to see how it's going, so that's the way the company does it," explains Gardner. "The person I know as Leslie Meingast is reflected in the way the company behaves."

### THE SUPPORTER

In fact, many of Meingast's personal traits are reflected in the company's policies, and none more so than her commitment to giving back. She views charitable work as both a personal and professional responsibility, and has made it her mission to ensure everyone has the opportunity to work for a living.

Putting its job-placement acumen to charitable use, The Personnel Department partnered with the Goodwill Industries to open 21 employment-assistance offices between 1992 and 1998. Then, in 1999, Meingast and company helped to launch the Galt Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to expanding employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities and other vocational barriers in the U.S. "We have put thousands of people with disabilities to work, taking them off the welfare roll, putting them into bona fide work and helping them feed themselves," says Meingast, who serves as president of the Galt Foundation's board of directors. And working from an example that has proved to be successful and self-sustaining, Meingast is striving to replicate that model in Canada, with hopes of launching in 2012.

### THE GO-GETTER

With such a strong resumé as both an advocate for diversity and a leader in the business world, Meingast seemed an obvious choice when Barbara Mowat, president of Impact Communications Ltd. and Vancouver chapter chair of the Women Presidents' Organization (WPO), approached her to join the WPO in 2007. "She is a compelling force," says Mowat. "She is a global leader

who has passion not just for the business side but for truly helping people."

Initially hesitant to get involved in "that woman thing," Meingast was quickly swayed by the opportunities presented by WPO and the extraordinary support of its members - all entrepreneurs leading multimillion-dollar companies.

"The female economy is a \$13-trillion economy globally, scheduled to increase to \$18 trillion," explains Meingast. "And the reason companies want diversity in their portfolio is because they understand that this market delivers: they're faster, they're more innovative, they're more cost-effective - because they simply have to be." In 2007, Meingast won the WPO award for her direction of the company demonstrating the most global growth. She has since been appointed international director.

Seeking out further opportunities to tap into the world of diversity, Meingast sought out the Women in Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC). As a Canadian without a green card she was precluded from joining the organization, so she jumped at the opportunity to bring it across the border and is a driving force behind an international expansion project of WBENC called WEConnect.

"Stepping into the diversity world, doors are opening up that I never would have imagined," says Meingast. "And looking at this 30-year milestone I really believe we've only just started. There's a seminal moment that comes within every organization, and I believe we're there. We've really anchored our principles in the organization, our culture has been developed, and our systems and processes are well developed. It's just phenomenal the opportunity that's sitting in front of us right now."

### THE REWARDS

Yet despite such ambition and success, Meingast is in no danger of losing sight of her vision: "Can you imagine anything more profound than what we do? Every day we teach people to fish. We help people find jobs and move along their career path so they can feed their families and so they can succeed in life. I don't think there's anything more important in the world than that. And that's really our passion as an organization." ■

*This promotional feature was prepared for The Personnel Department by BC Business magazine's Special Advertising Features Dept. Writer: Tiffany Sloan. For information contact VP of corporate features John Cochrane at 604-299-7311. Email: jcochrane@canadawide.com*



## Congratulations to The Personnel Department on their Continued Success

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