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Flexibility key in workplace

Hockey playoffs are a good example of a chance for employers to spread some goodwill for the future

BY STEVE MACNAULL
The Daily Courier

Attention bosses: Let workers leave early this afternoon so they can catch the start of Game 5 of the Canucks-Bruins Stanley Cup final at 5 p.m. Same goes for Monday because this 2-2 series is going to at least six games.

"This Stanley Cup run is a massive opportunities for companies to build goodwill with their employees," human resources expert Ian Cook told a Kelowna Chamber of Commerce lunch crowd this week.

"By being flexible and doing this, employers aren't just playing their part in this incredible sports experience, but they will be paid back by employees who will remember how great you were during the Stanley Cup final."

With the Vancouver Canucks in the Pacific time zone and the Boston Bruins in the Eastern time zone, that means a three-hour difference.

To make viewers on each coast (as well as broadcasters, advertisers, bars and pubs) happy, the games have been set to start at 5 p.m. Vancouver time and 8 p.m. Boston time.

The Stanley Cup final example fit in well with Cook's overall message of flexibility, flexibility, flexibility.

"Flexibility is key," said the director of research of the B.C. Human Resources Management Association, by way of reinforcing the point.

"Flexibility is more powerful than salary when it comes to employee happiness and retention."

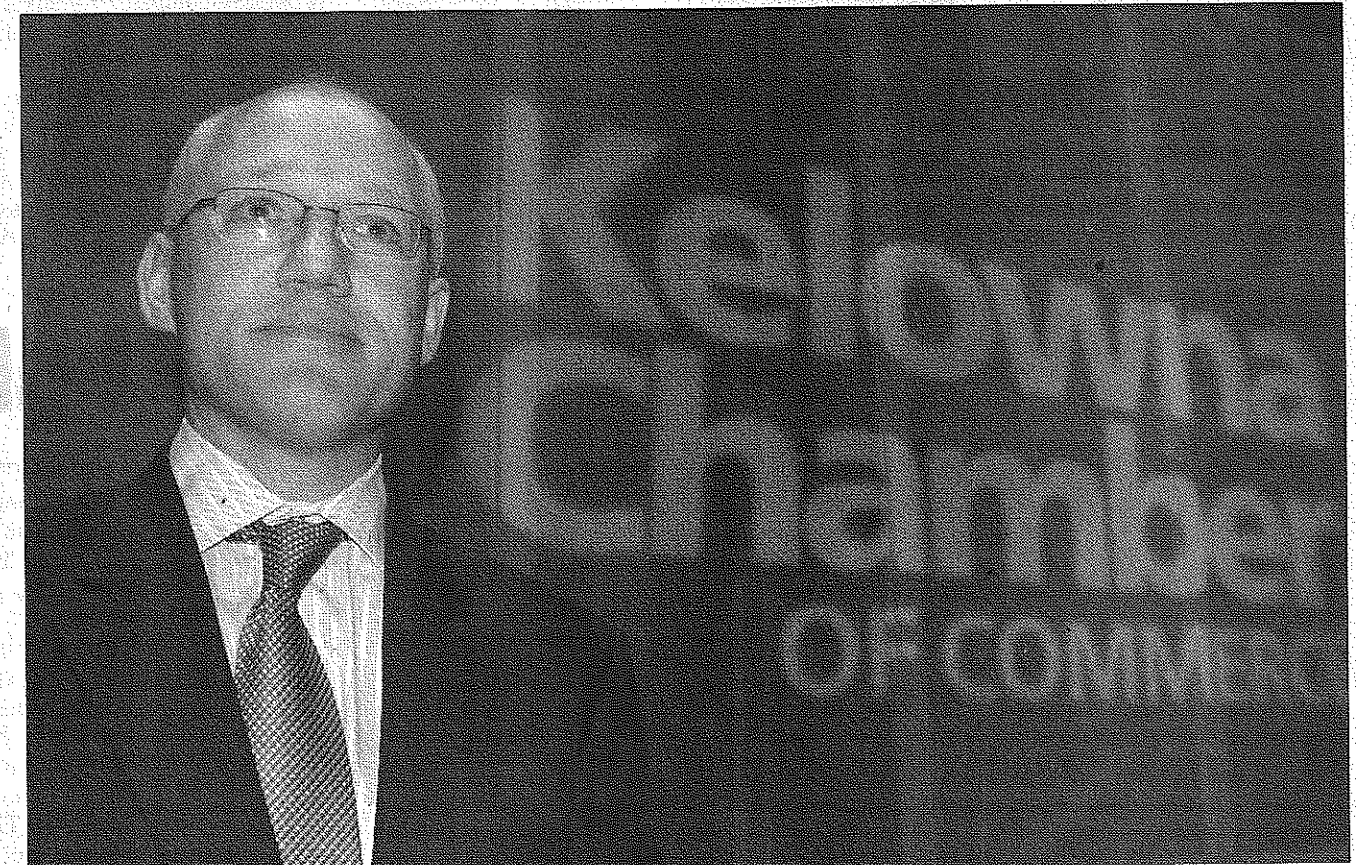
Vancouver-based Cook, a transplanted Scot, shocked the crowd when he uttered the statistic that two-thirds of workers would quit their jobs if they could.

"That's a lot of people grudgingly staying in jobs because they have to," he said.

"A lot of it has to do with the depths of the recession in 2008-09 leading to layoffs and rather than the people who still have a job feeling grateful, they feel taken advantage of because they are expected to do more work with no extra pay or recognition. A lot of goodwill was eroded."

Cook indicated the situation is getting better as the economy comes out of recession and firms start to hire again.

However, he stressed that employers continually have to



STEVE MACNAULL/The Daily Courier

A great way for companies to build goodwill with their employees is to let them leave early today to catch Game 5 of the Stanley Cup final between the Vancouver Canucks and the Boston Bruins.

stay on their toes to ensure they get the best out of workers.

"The best companies have this figured out," said Cook.

"They pay competitively, but where they set themselves apart is with a total awards package that includes time off for training that the company pays for, the opportunity to work on special projects, flexibility, more holidays and customized benefits."

While the recession took the spotlight off the burgeoning labour shortage, Cook said the crisis will be back, likely in 2013-14.

The massive baby boom generation is starting to retire and there aren't enough young workers ready to take their place.

As such, employers will have to be more savvy to attract and keep young workers, who are a completely different breed than the baby boomers before them.

"Young workers want more money, more promotions, more training, more flexibility, more appreciation, more recognition and more holidays," Cook said.

"Employers are going to have to figure out ways to make this all work."

On top of this, there is going to be a gap between the jobs available and what workers are willing to do, with the biggest growth in the lower paying service jobs that young workers feel are beneath them.

Part of the demand can be filled with part-time workers and immigrants, but jobs and tasks will be farmed out to people who like the idea of their owning their business and taking on contracts instead of being a full-time employee.

