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Nancy MacKay, PhD | Founder & CEO

## Navigating through Turbulent Economic Times

Interview with MacKay CEO Forums member [Patricia Kaiser](#), Chief Operating Officer, [Sierra Systems](#)  
*Sierra Systems is a top tier IT services and management consulting firm offering advisory services, systems integration, and managed application services.*

### **What are you doing to navigate through turbulent economic times?**

Sierra is a consulting firm engaged by our clients to help them navigate through these difficult times. Our success is tied to their success so our ability to manage a laser-focused organization is paramount. It starts with a clearly articulated plan and regular progress updates. I focused the team on improving our agility - for our people, in our processes and in our competitive sales pursuits. Roadblocks were removed and I pushed the organization to become more self-sufficient, allowing us to reduce SG&A costs. We eliminated or reduced business processes that didn't drive value, increasing our responsiveness and incented our people to be more creative in our sales pursuits with our clients which has positioned us for future growth.

### **How do you keep your leadership team motivated?**

One of the leadership characteristics we look for aside from experience and talent is an "abundance mentality", right out of Covey's 7 Habits. It's a mindset that results in the vested interest in other's accountabilities and the sharing of decision making. It opens possibilities, alternatives, and creativity and helps identify new opportunities despite reduced budgets in this downturned economy. I keep our leadership team motivated by giving them the freedom to think outside the box, test new ideas and support alternative approaches as well as keeping them aligned to our corporate plan and asking them to be financially prudent.

### **What leadership strategies do you and your leadership team use to keep employees engaged?**

We over communicate and are visible. Employees care most about working on exciting projects and solving client problems, so keeping everyone informed about upcoming work is critical. Career development is also important so we actively promote our Career Advisor mentoring program, Communities of Interest and our online 24x7 learning portal. I lead a COO Council where employees work with management to develop programs that enrich the consulting experience. Local engagements teams focus on office-specific activities and our new online Reward and Recognition system facilitates real-time, peer to peer Thank You's. In addition, monthly newsletters, business updates, bi-monthly staff meetings, technical sessions, employee surveys and regular socials help keep engagement high.

### **What is your favorite book pick on this topic?**

The book isn't specifically about navigating through turbulent economic times, but it's so on point from a strategy perspective during good times and bad....[Playing To Win: How Strategy Really Works](#) by Alan Lafley and Roger Martin. It's about asking some basic questions and then challenging yourself and your leadership team on arriving at the difficult answers. Through the competitive lens, it's about knowing what makes your business different, where you want to play and then truly understanding "how" you are going to play to win. We've looked at our business through this lens and are pushing ourselves to operate and execute accordingly.

CEO Leadership Tip



CEO Health Tip



## Leading in Times of Crisis

There is no question that global economic dynamics has resulted in tough times for many organizations. In times like these, committing to leadership at the CEO level is even more critical. Unfortunately, many CEOs have never stopped to take stock of what this actually means.

Edmonton Forum Chair Jason Randhawa challenges CEOs to think about the following and how they "own" leadership in their organizations:

1. Leadership starts with you as the CEO. Not as a title, not as a position. Leading comes down to a conscious decision. Leadership is chosen individually and internally.
2. Leaders and teams are mutually interdependent. One can't exist without the other. Leadership is applied collectively and externally.
3. Focus your team on a clear objective in times of trouble. Define your "rallying cry". Communicate clearly and often. Leadership is active.

Contributed by [Jason S. Randhawa](#), ICD.D, a Forum Chair for MacKay CEO Forums in Edmonton, and a specialist in corporate strategy, governance and leadership development.

## Managing Daily Stress

Dr. Elisabeth Sherman, neuropsychologist at Copeman Healthcare Centre, has identified three main sources of daily brain stress. These include over-scheduling, interruptions due to multitasking, and constantly rushing. She suggests the following tips to manage stressors before they become chronic:

1. Treat breaks/lunch as sacred time. Schedule them using smartphone alerts; aim for 10 minutes every 90 minutes.
2. Triage your tasks so they're not all due the same day or week.
3. Complete problem-solving and creative tasks first thing in the morning; leave email for later.
4. Stay away from your phone or the Internet when you need a recharge. Instead, stretch, go for a walk or make a cup of tea.
5. Break the five-alarm mentality. Not every task is urgent!

Contributed by [Dr. Elisabeth Sherman](#), Brain Health Program, Copeman Healthcare

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## New Forum Chair Opportunities

At MacKay CEO Forums, our vision is to populate the world with better leaders and we are currently inspiring over 600 CEOs/Executives across Canada to accelerate their performance. Our BHAG is to become the dominant player in Canada by 2017 (1000+ members) and then begin the global journey to 10,000+ members around the world.

In order to achieve our BHAG, we will continue to add new forums, but we must first identify and partner with new Forum Chairs. Please consider your network and reach out to anyone you think may be interested in this dynamic opportunity.

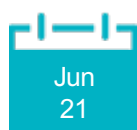
We are interested in partnering with Forum Chairs in: Toronto/GTA, South Western Ontario, Calgary, Edmonton, and Vancouver/Fraser Valley/Richmond/Surrey.

[Read More](#)

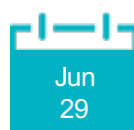
## Events



## Breakfast Events



Toronto 7am-9am



Vancouver 7am-9am

## Placing Better Bets on Talent and Succession

### PANELISTS:

**Bob Peacock** President, Almag Aluminum Inc.  
**Rocco Rossi** President & CEO, Prostate Cancer Canada  
**Jennifer Mondoux** Managing Director, Waterstone Human Capital  
**Dominique Jones** Chief People Officer, Halogen Software Inc.

Note: this event is for CEOs + Executives

[Email Nancy for details](#)

*Co-hosted with Aon Hewitt*

## What Great CEOs & Executives Do to Achieve Extraordinary Results

### PANELISTS:

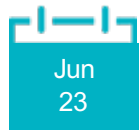
**Guff Muench** Board Director: Westport Fuel Systems, Ames Tile, Belcorp, Smith-Cameron, Vancouver Community College Foundation & BC CEO Awards Judge  
**John Nicola** CEO & Chairman, Nicola Wealth Management & 2015 BC CEO Award Winner  
**David Schellenberg** Managing Director, Highland West Capital Ltd. & 2012 BC CEO Award Winner

Note: this event is for CEOs + Executives

[Email Nancy for details](#)

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## BC Networking Event



Vancouver 11am-3pm

### 2016 BC Business Top 100 - the province's top networking event

Join Peter Legge as he continues his revealing and insightful interview series with British Columbia's business legends. This year's special guest is CEO extraordinaire Christine Day.

[Registration & Information](#)

*Mackay CEO Forums is a Corporate Event Partner for this event.*

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## Welcome to our Newest Forum Chair

[Jonathan Mara](#), Vancouver - Jonathan brings over 25 years of experience as an accomplished entrepreneur and business leader and over 21 years of experience in chairing CEO peer groups to this role. Jonathan has found his true passion in helping organizational leadership teams succeed in their business. As a mentor and coach he is known for fostering high trust in peer group environments. Using emotional intelligence leadership strategies, he achieves deeper disclosure in identifying the true root cause of issues leading to breakthrough results.

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## CEO & Executive Forums

Mackay CEO Forums accelerates CEO performance through the highest impact, least time-intensive peer groups for results-oriented CEOs and top executives in Canada. If you would like to explore a forum opportunity, or refer someone to us, please contact [Nancy](#).