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Recertify with remote control (Editor's notes)

*TV shows highlight the best and worst in HR*

By Todd Humber

Seminars, conferences, workshops, mentoring, writing articles — these are all fine ways to earn recertification points for the Certified Human Resources Professional (CHRP) designation.

But there's an omission from the list: Television. That's right. That good old idiot box glowing in the corner of your living room, if used correctly, can teach you a thing or two about human resources.

Two programs, in particular, should be singled out by the Canadian Council of Human Resources Associations (CCHRA) as worthy of points just for tuning in every week: *Mad Men* and *The Office*.

Let's start with the first. *Mad Men* is an hour-long drama about Madison Avenue advertising executives set in the early 1960s. I can't vouch for what it was like to work in that era, but I'm told by people in the know it's not that far off reality.

So, outside of being one of the most entertaining shows on TV, why is this series valuable viewing for HR? Well, ever wonder what an office would look like without a sexual harassment policy? Or what would happen if you let employees keep alcohol in their offices, and senior management encouraged them to drink it during work hours? Tune in to *Mad Men* to find out.

(Spoiler alert: It can lead to pregnant secretaries and a whole bunch of infidelity. Plus, judging by the amount of smoking that goes on in the office, there are going to be some serious long-term health implications for the staff at Sterling Cooper.)

*The Office* may be a little easier to relate to — it's set in present times. If you're not a regular viewer, you've got a lot of catching up to do. The American version of the show is now in its fifth season. (It's a remake of a British series.)

The show centres around the character Michael Scott, played by Steve Carell, who proves that being one of the most kind-spirited, well-intentioned people on the planet means nothing when it comes to workplace gaffes.

The show is a comedy but there are real lessons between the laughs. Topics tackled read like an HR conference lineup: diversity, sexual harassment, health care, terminations, performance reviews, e-mail surveillance, office romances, conflict resolution and grief counselling, to name but a few.

HR might not be treated in the kindest light in the Scranton office of Dunder Mifflin —

poor Toby, the HR professional in the first four seasons, is treated with absolute scorn by Scott, the branch manager. But it's his disdain of all things HR — and the problems that ensue as a result — that make it must-watch television.

Looking for a business case to support a new HR initiative? Tune in every week and the show will give you perfect fodder for why you need that policy in place.

To make it easy for CCHRA to correct this CHRP oversight, I'll arbitrarily assign recertification point values: Two points for *The Office* and four points for *Mad Men*.

So pick up those TV guides, put some fresh batteries in the remote and start programming your PVRs.