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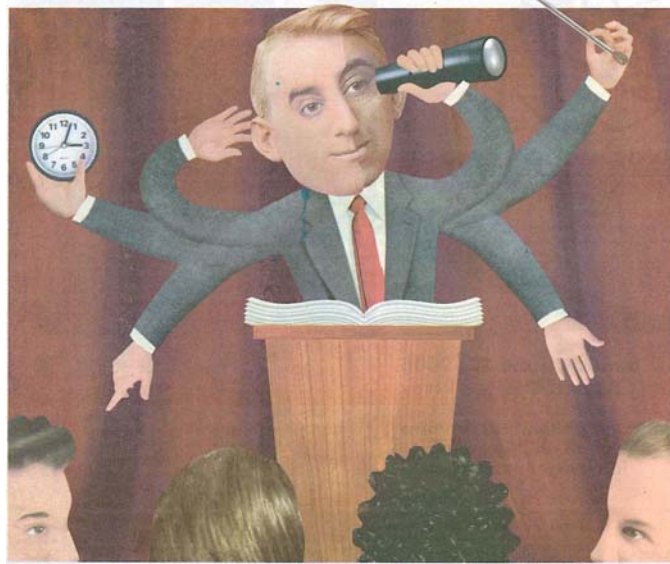
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FOCUS ON

CEOs of Massachusetts



For CEOs, the times they are a changin'

Today's worker bees expect open doors and less hierarchy; greater accountability is in demand

BY DENISE MAGNELL
SPECIAL TO THE JOURNAL

As head of his own company, and as someone who finds top executives for other businesses, **Charley Polachi** has seen a sea change in the world of the CEO.

"Thirty years ago when I started, company leaders were very hierarchical, passing information up and down the chain of command. Today, with the push of button, I can com-

municate with a lot of people. It's a lot more collaborative," said Polachi, co-founder and partner of **Polachi & Co. Inc.**, an executive recruiting firm in

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■ Who's underpaid, overpaid? See this year's CEO rankings. **Page 38.**

Framingham.

That attitude increasingly guides CEOs who today cultivate a degree of employee openness that was unheard of a generation ago.

It is fueled on all levels — in company record-keeping, where Sarbanes-Oxley regulations require more transparency in the conduct of business; among clients who expect greater accountability; and by a workforce that has learned to embrace the term "collaboration."

Indeed, some CEOs believe the nature of today's workers — mobile, tech-savvy, more egalitarian — drive the way company leaders direct their operations.

"It has less to do with the CEO and more to do with the employee base," said **Mike Sheehan**, who has been CEO of Boston advertising shop **Hill, Holiday**. "This generation grew up with team concepts in school, and they're very comfortable working in groups in the workplace. There's certainly a greater communal feel driven by the workforce."

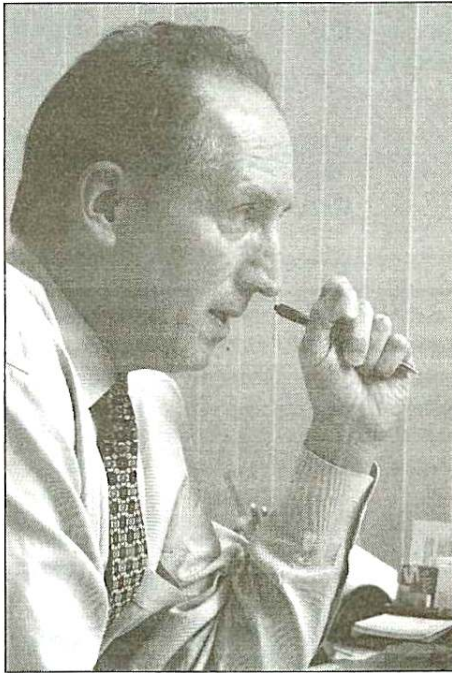
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CHANGES: As workers demand more say, CEOs learn to adjust

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And it doesn't stop with employees. "Customers are experiencing the same dynamics," Sheehan said. "More and more, they expect teamwork and they want to meet the members of the team. Idea generation is seldom a one-person job."

Robert Brennan has been a CEO at



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Executive recruiter Charley Polachi says CEOs have learned to delegate.

three companies in his career, and has watched the role of the chief executive change dramatically. In June, he added CEO to his title at **Iron Mountain Inc.** (NYSE: IRM), where he has been president since 2005.

"If you were a CEO 20 years ago, you were some mystical person, like a senator or a pastor. Now leadership is questioned more," said Brennan. "There's not an automatic deference that there would have been towards a CEO years ago, and less deference to leadership is

probably healthier."

Still, having previously led **American Internet Corp.**, bought in 1998 by **Cisco Systems Inc.** (Nasdaq: CSCO), and **Connected Corp.**, acquired by **Iron Mountain** in 2004, Brennan has no illusions about who makes final decisions.

"You still need to have the buck stop with the leader," he said. "You can't rely on teamwork for all the decisions."

From the time she founded **Fox RPM Corp.** in Boston 20 years ago, **Gretchen Fox** made flexibility a priority for her employees. That hasn't changed, although workplace mobility and communication improvements have resulted in "almost a transformation from the Stone Age," she said.

"There are two things that are keys to success, and that's flexibility and trust. It's paramount when you're not observing your staff all the time. There's no room for micromanaging," said Fox, who is president of the relocation and project management company.

"We ask our employees what they value in the workplace. Independence and flexibility always come up."

There is a practical side to the "democratization" of the workplace, too. "With a more mobile workforce, you need more meeting space, but less furniture for an open design. Real estate prices have gotten really high, so there is a cost issue there as well," she said.

And there is the inevitable down side. "Sometimes it's not a bad idea for a CEO to have a door on his office," Polachi said.

Brennan also said leaders, by opening up to everyone's input, need to be able to sift through "all the noise" that comes with information overload.

Yet, some things that mark a good leader don't change.

"There are some constants – integrity, communication, inspiring others to a common vision," added Brennan. "But now humility is also an important characteristic."