

ROWE

ROWE stands for “Results Oriented Work Environment.” The emphasis in such a work environment is on **performance** and not the **appearance** of it (providing ‘face time’ or being in place from 9-5). **ROWE** is rooted in the belief that work does not have to be painful or a ‘necessary evil.’ Products developed in a **ROWE** it seemed, would have to be better, like ‘milk from contented cows.’ **ROWE** in practice means “each person is free to do whatever they want, whenever they want as long as the work gets done.”

ROWE is a creation of Cali Ressler and Jody Thompson who were HR staff at the international headquarters of **Best Buy**, the electronics giant (www.culturerx.com). The company was relocating from a spacious exurban site to a first ring suburb south of Minneapolis. The environmental impact of too-much company moving into too-little space was anticipated with dread by community and staff alike. How could it be done without disastrous results? **ROWE** was the solution Ressler and Thompson devised and it succeeded beautifully.

Rush hour gridlock did not occur and staff performance improved. Practical outcomes have been studied and results have been published in a number of journals and popular business magazines.

But how would a **ROWE** work at a small non-profit? What steps would need to be taken to help **Inclusion Inc** become one? The process has been a long one and is not by any stretch complete. The essential steps to date include:

- Establish professional staff’s exempt status to assure compliance with wage and hour requirements
- Provide professional staff with laptops and cell phones to make working from remote sites possible
- Install a new, larger computer server and firewall to handle enough **virtual private networks (VPN)** so that most staff working from remote sites could access files and notes on the server from outside
- Develop a flatter agency structure so people to encourage people to manage themselves
- Agree on what performance results are critical and essential so they could be measured and communicated to staff

This is the point we have reached effective October, 2009. Now that we have the threshold ‘results’ established we can move on to the real payoff providing ever higher quality services to our customers. We’re almost certain that this will happen because those services will be provided by professionals who practice self-determination while creating an environment where those we serve determine their own destinies as much as possible.