



HR Frontiers: Shifting Borders and Changing Boundaries

Edited by Karen V. Beaman
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Notice of disclosure: *This reviewer was also one of the contributors to this collection. Knowing that most or all of the book was written in 2006, I was extremely eager to see the final publication and curious about how well it stands up in light of the recent extreme changes in our economy and our world of business.*

To tell the truth, I think it stands up very well. More than one chapter makes reference to “turbulent” times, which

seems both prescient and an understatement!

Editor Beaman’s goal for the book was “...to push the framework of HR and HRIT thinking beyond traditional business strategies and tactics to reveal a new way of working for HR.” Some chapters do this more effectively than others, and each reader’s background, perspective, and priorities will determine which chapters are most relevant and have the greatest value. That’s exactly normal for any book written by various authors on related but widely varied topics. But I was pleasantly surprised that, at least by my background and priorities, none seemed to have been made irrelevant by the commotion of recent months. Some of these pieces might have been written yesterday.

Some examples ...

- Vinnie Mirchandani, consultant, entrepreneur and former technology industry analyst with Gartner, authored a chapter about technology innovations available to assist with human capital management but still pretty much “cutting edge” in many organizations, e.g., using TiVo for first-round interviews, and “wikis” to keep former employees connected and create a useful network of experienced potential part-timers.
- With cost reductions high on the list of needs for every organization, outsourcing of functions such as HR and IT is of urgent interest to many. Synco Jonkeren, former head of SAP’s HRO Strategy group, sets forth a thorough examination of the factors relevant to the decision to outsource, or not outsource, HR.
- If HR directors were under pressure a year ago to demonstrate the value of HR beyond the processing of paperwork, that pressure has surely doubled or tripled since then. Dave Ulrich’s chapter is adapted from one of his earlier books, but it’s a nice distillation of familiar themes that clearly state a vision for HR, and how to get there.
- It is time and past time for HR to be *thinking* about “delivering the right workforce.” Understanding how to identify and deliver the right workforce has become critical, and having the tools and information to take appropriate action is essential as the world, business or otherwise, moves faster and faster. Carl C. Hoffman, of IBM Global Services, and Kathleen P. Hoffman, from Human Capital Management and Performance LLC, provide a highly in-depth analysis of the challenges behind this effort.
- The chapter by Row Henson (formerly with PeopleSoft, now an HCM Fellow with Oracle) focuses on the challenges of the contingent workforce and is perhaps even more relevant today. She is right on target with her discussion of the technology – the enterprise portal, self-service, collaborative applications, HCM analytics –

that is increasingly valuable in the effective management of such a workforce.

- This book has a thorough chapter dedicated to data privacy and security. Dr. Donald Harris's name is perhaps not so well-known to some of us, but this chapter provides a good introduction to a topic that surely could justify an entire book all by itself. I don't know how useful it will be to specialists in this area, but as we deal with increasing globalization and interdependencies and what seems like an explosion of regulations, the chapter provides information that will be useful to the rest of us!

To my mind, a business publication needs to both educate and provide insight/inspiration. Whether you think in terms of Human Resources or human capital management – whether your organization is public or private sector – whether you are prospering, holding steady or seriously

worried about the future, “*HR Frontiers*” offers practical lists and real-life examples as well as grand visions of what the function can and should accomplish.

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