

From the Editor

By Karen V. Beaman



Social network analysis (SNA) or organizational network analysis (ONA), as some businesses prefer since it doesn't sound so "touchy-feely," is an important business tool today because it reveals what really happens inside an organization – how the knowledge work is actually getting done.

For nearly 15 years, the late Bob Stambaugh, to whom we dedicate this year's issues of the *IHRIM Journal*, was an ardent believer in the concept of mapping the collaboration of knowledge workers to understand how their networks, or lack of them, influenced productivity and success in organizations. He believed that SNA/ONA was a tool that would and should be used by HR professionals to tap the maximum knowledge of the workforce.

Our first feature is "A Short History of Social Network Analysis in Organizations" by Valdis Krebs, a pioneer in the field of social network analysis and developer of a software tool used for SNA. His historical perspective commences in the 1930s and he divides the article into two parts: BC, which is for the era before computers and AM, which is the era after microprocessors. SNA has parallels to HRIS as both were influenced and grew rapidly after computing power was easily available. Krebs tells us that without computers these two fields would be mostly theories and unimplemented ideas, but sociology and technology need to work together to produce knowledge out of the data that we gather and process.

Gerald Falkowski provides our next article, "Harnessing the Power of Social Network Analysis." Falkowski was a lead consultant on many SNA/ONA projects during his 30-year career with IBM, and believes that the real power of SNA is not just its ability to tell the

story of what is happening today, but also its ability to point out ways to change the story's ending for tomorrow. SNA maps can point out exactly which teams and individuals need to increase their communication, who needs more input on decisions, and who needs to become more involved in innovation.

Eric Lesser, Lisa Tondreau and Edward Vitalos author our next article, "Time Well Spent: Addressing the Challenges and Opportunities of a Maturing Workforce." The authors agree that this issue will manifest itself to some companies when they are least prepared for it, presenting significant challenges to their operations, as the loss of corporate knowledge and the inability to attract and retain qualified candidates make it difficult to execute on critical processes and activities. But, forward-thinking companies are preparing themselves from a risk management standpoint, and looking at the maturing workforce as an opportunity to rethink their workforce management strategy to meet future needs and outpace competition.

"Shared Services Deployment: The Rubber Meets the Road" by Ian Ruddle and Jason Geller is our next article. The article begins with a detailed review of what shared services is and is not, then focuses on taking the shared services model within the Human Resources function from a commitment – in other words, something that the company has conceptually committed to – to a reality. Deployment comprises – in sequence – the design, build-and-test, rollout, and optimization of the shared services model. Each of these phases of deployment is covered in a subsequent section of this article.

In the Out of the Box department, Dr. John Sullivan describes in detail how "HR Must Assume the Role of Managing the 'What Works' Best Practice Sharing Process." Such programs produce immediate results because they only require sharing of one or two "what works" tools with a few key managers to get immediate and positive feedback. The only difficulty in setting up a "what works" distribution process is the fact that you would be a pioneer in HR – and there are few pioneers in HR. But, if you are one, you can become a corporate hero!

Karen Elmhirst provides our Trends in Technology department "The Power of Social Networks." In the article, Elmhirst describes several technology solutions that can help make the webs of connection between people visible, so that we can begin to decipher why the organization has behaved as it has, and what has been getting in the way of success. If you're looking for ways to increase organizational effectiveness, it might just be time to better understand who's relating to whom and how work is actually getting done.

Our Facts & Research department features "What is the Value of Social Networks in Talent Management?" by Yves Lermusiaux who describes a social network, its specific uses in talent acquisition, and how to leverage it for competitive advantage. He advises that social networks can provide one more effective channel when used judiciously to augment a successful talent management strategy.

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