

From the Editor

By Karen V. Beaman



Not since the Y2K issue has there been such a hot HR topic as the “future of the workplace” is now. As you may recall with the Y2K issue, when clocks around the world announced the 21st Century, all was well in “computerland.” Given the pending retirement of some 70 million baby boomers, there is cause for concern, but certainly not panic, for those retirements will take place over many years. What companies must create now is a strategy that designs a productive workplace for a culturally and age diverse employee workforce. This *Journal* issue focuses on the inevitable changing workplace and its impact on the future success of companies of all sizes.

Our first article, “Opportunities for Tomorrow’s Workplace: HR Technology to Lead – or Not?” is written by Patricia K. Zingheim and Jay R. Schuster. The authors contend that human resources technology needs to be able to support the new workplace by doing more than just accelerating the speed and ease by which traditional human resource operations and transactions are handled. The major challenge HR technology professionals face is the decision as to whether or not they are prepared to support organizations that want to journey to high-performance through workforce skill, competence and results.

Alexia Martin provides statistics and commentary from the CedarCrestone 2005 HCM Survey eighth annual research initiative in her article, “The State of Workforce Technologies and Service Delivery Approaches.” Survey data indicate that organizations are achieving strong benefits from service delivery approaches augmented by workforce technologies. Regardless of service delivery approach or technologies selected, continued development of a business case to justify investments, business process improvements to optimize people and technologies, and change management are the practices to ensure success.

“Designing the Workplace for Innovation” by Timothy Danko and Gerald Falkowski is the title of our next article. The authors explore workplace design and its role in creating an environment for collaboration and, therefore, innovation. They provide a framework for thinking about workplaces, and then make a distinction between knowledge, information and ideas and how to provide knowledge and information in a given workplace to support the generation of ideas. Lastly, they discuss how sharing knowledge and ideas requires the means and opportunity for workers and teams to collaborate and how enabling and promoting collaboration requires a coherent set of policies, rewards and values.

Our next article, “Creating Value from Investments in Labor Scheduling,” by Eric Lesser and Vijay Mehrotra focuses on providing an overview of labor planning and scheduling practices found in today’s organizations. The authors dis-

cuss the potential benefits of improved labor planning and scheduling and provide examples of firms that have been successful in realizing these types of benefits. They identify the business and technology drivers that have contributed to the increased importance of labor planning and scheduling. The authors conclude the article with key questions that organizations should consider as they are considering future investments in labor planning and scheduling.

Dr. John Sullivan in his article, “Metrics – The Future of HR,” states that Human Resources is the last major business function to adopt the widespread use of metrics. Recently, supply chain management has demonstrated how previously “low glamour” overhead functions (purchasing, warehouse and transportation) could move relatively quickly from obscurity to “profit center.” Their success has spurred HR to realize they need to begin using metrics to improve their image and prove their value. Dr. Sullivan provides an in-depth analysis of why metrics are essential in HR and how they should be designed and implemented for organizational success.

Aileen MacMillan and Jeff Chad focus on the “Workplace of the Future” in the Trends in HR Technology department in this issue. The authors say that two main issues will significantly impact the workplace of the future – an ever-increasing rate of technological and demographic change will transform how we work. From an employer’s standpoint, competition for skilled workers will increase, concern about loss of many experienced workers will become a reality, and changing needs of an aging population will evolve. It will be the flexible workplaces that will contribute to the ability to attract and retain skilled workers from all generations.

In our new department, Web 2.0, Bennett Reddin provides us with “Conversations @ Kapa’a.” The author shares his thoughts and comments (and those of his colleagues) when they gathered from nearly the world over to design elements for next-generation HRIS. The author invites you into these conversations, from the debates and differences to the agreements and mutual discoveries.

In his Facts & Research column, Yves Lermusi predicts that tomorrow’s workplace revolution, triggered by technology enablers and the global economy, will be about the impact it creates on the individual workers themselves. This revolution will create a repositioning of the workplace not only as a place to perform for the best of the group, but also for the greater satisfaction of the individual.

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