

From the Publisher

By Tom Faulkner



This last issue of *IHRIM Journal* for 2007 is a snapshot of years past with an eye on the years ahead. *IHRIM's* first book, edited by the late Robert H. Stambaugh, was *21 Tomorrows: HR Systems in the Emerging Workplace of the 21st Century*. The book published in 2000 and now out of print, included chapters by 21 authors who offered their insight about the future of human resources and HRIS.

We have selected a few of the chapters of the book to use as articles for this issue just in case you are one of the few that never read the book. We do so because the *21 Tomorrows* sequel will be published in May 2008. It will be fun to see what these thought leaders predicted for the future and what has or has not taken place. It will also be fun to read their chapters in the new book to get their take on what their predictions were and how they view the second decade of the 21st century.

Predicting anything but death and taxes is always risky business. As you read these essays from eight years ago, remember that in 2000 the world was getting ready to experience the dreaded Y2K – the event that could bring all computers to a complete stand-still. Of course, we know now that it was a non-event. Microsoft introduced Windows 2000, the U.S. sued Microsoft for anti-trust violations, the USS Cole was attacked by suicide bombers, the New York Yankees won their 26th World Series title, George Bush defeated Al Gore in the U.S. presidential election; the closest election ever in U.S. history and decided by a hanging chad in Florida. President Bill Clinton visited Vietnam, a trip he was able to avoid during the war, while his wife Hillary Rodham was elected U.S. senator from New York, becoming the first First Lady to win public office. And, of course, 2000 will be remembered as the peak of the dot-com bubble before its economy-crashing bust later that year.

Little else will be remembered about 2001 than the terrorist attack September 11 on the World Trade Center in New York, the Pentagon in Washington, DC and the crash of the plane in Shanksville, Pennsylvania whose target was the White House. Nearly 3,000 were killed that day and the events that followed not only changed the U.S. but the world. The U.S. and some of its allies entered into a war on terror, which continues to impact our lives today.

The Enron and Dynegy bankruptcies in late 2001 were the beginning of the fall for many major corporations whose business practices were not just unethical,

but in some cases, illegal. It was the bad acts of these companies that gave rise to the U.S. Sarbanes-Oxley Act, which continues to have an economic impact on U.S. corporations.

Throughout 2001 and up to and through 2003, the U.S. economy went in the tank taking much of the rest of the world with it. The dot-com bust, the 9/11 tragedy and the bankruptcies of some of the largest U.S. employers gave rise to unemployment and a weak stock market.

But as is almost always the case, we flourish in a wartime economy. When the U.S. war on terror kicked in, so did new job growth and climbing investment portfolios. And as the economies around the world began to grow, ironically it was technology companies that were leading the way. But this time, there were technology companies that actually had a product or service with value – not just pipe dreams living off venture capital and an artificially-driven stock price.

The major world economies have flourished from 2004 to today mainly because technology enabled them to operate efficiently in all parts of the world. The Internet has flattened the world and allowed the smallest companies to compete with some of the largest in all industries. Once the owning and utilization of technology was the ultimate competitive advantage, but today the companies with the competitive advantage are the companies with the right number of people, in the right place, at the right time, with the right skill set at the most effective cost structure. The HR department, and its effective utilization of technology, is the key to short- and long-term success at small, medium and large organizations.

All our *21 Tomorrows* authors have been involved in HR and HR technology from either the vendor, practitioner or consultant side of the business – some for more than 30 years. They know what they foresaw in year 2000, they know what has actually happened in the years since, and soon we'll know what they see for the future of this industry.

We hope you enjoy this look back at our authors' prognostications and look forward to *21 Tomorrows, Part II* due out in May 2008.

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