
From the Editor

By Karen V. Beaman



There is much talk about the changing role of human resources (HR), how we are moving away from tactical, administrative tasks to more strategic, value-added activities, and how we need to become a business partner in the organization. The question arises as to how today's HR departments will achieve this radical shift. How are HR professionals to be re-tooled and re-trained in order to take up this challenge? How are our human resource systems to support us in this endeavor?

The problem we face is that the existing HR systems on the market were built for yesterday's HR requirements, yet still drive today's business and HR processes. We need to break out of the traditional, transaction-based mold we have been schooled in and move beyond our "comfort zone" (in the words of Jenni Lehman) to new roles and responsibilities and to new systems designed with a broader range of functions. We need to make "human" needs and the business requirements of tomorrow the drivers of a completely new generation system — a "post-modern system" (as described by Bob Stambaugh) — one that is built for the "human" side of human resources.

We are pleased to have two articles in this issue by Gartner Group analysts specializing in HR systems issues. The first article, by Jenni Lehman, "Human Resources: Outside the 'Comfort Zone'", discusses the need for HR professionals and existing systems to move beyond an administrative management focus to more strategic enterprise business management and employee self-service capabilities. Lehman describes the gap that exists in our current processes, tools, and technologies and how specific functional extensions to existing HRMS products are being developed, bringing a longer life to legacy systems. She presents the "Targeted Solutions Lifecycle" — a model that describes the process of creation and assimilation of new functionality within an information system, recommending that companies seeking product extensions plan for a relatively short lifecycle and a quick return on investment.

Our second feature article, by Diane Tunnick Morello, "What HR Needs to Understand about the Changing IT Workforce," looks at what HR can do to facilitate the changing

role of IT and the pervasive workforce shortage. The required IT competency is changing from "do-ers", those with "know-how" and specific product knowledge, to "planners", those with more general business and IT management expertise. Morello describes

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how HR can bridge the gap with IT, helping to determine the organization's risk, assess the labor market, identify appropriate candidates, re-train existing employees, and retain talented, flexible IT professionals in today's competitive market.

Joel Lapointe in "Enterprise Performance Management: Seizing the Y2002 Opportunity" talks about the four strategic performance initiatives that organizations must pursue order to enhance organizational performance: strategic alignment, process innovation, technology deployment, and people motivation. Gary Durbin's "Secure Flexibility in Web-Based Employee/Managerial Self-Service" discusses the changing needs of HR and how flexible, intelligent Web-based solutions can deploy secure HR self-service throughout the enterprise. And, finally, Bob Stambaugh presents a model for an entirely new HR system — a "post-modern" system — one that extends so far beyond HR and, in fact, beyond the enterprise itself, that it should be viewed as an ecosystem — the Human Resource Information Ecology (HRIE). Drawn from complexity theory, Stambaugh talks about a new HR ecology based on emergent structures, which develop, mesh, and mutate over time as they adapt to the demands of the new HR environment.

Scott Tannenbaum continues his regular series on Knowledge Management (KM), "On the Knowledge Frontier," addressing the problem of where knowledge management should report within the organization. As with most things, there is no one right answer. Each company needs to consider their unique strengths and weaknesses in determining the most effective KM structure for their organization.

Valdis Krebs' regular column on "Working in the Connected World" presents a different angle on the knowledge management problem, showing that it is not "what" you know, but rather "who" you know that determines success. Thus, HR's role needs to evolve away

from one of working with individuals or "unconnected" teams of people to one of helping to manage "connected assets" — or groups of people interacting effectively. HR professionals need to adopt a "whole systems" mode of thinking if they are to help improve the effectiveness of our complex human systems.

And, finally, our regular HRIS legal columnists continue to keep us abreast of the latest regulatory issues surrounding HR systems. Edward Isler describes appropriate and inappropriate withholdings from employee wages and gives us some guidelines on effective practices. Phil Jones discusses the European Union directives on workstation ergonomics, which, although extensive, are quite sensible — "best practices already followed by good employers", resulting in a more efficient and productive workforce.

As the source of current research and thinking in the field of human resource information systems, the *IHRIM Journal* brings you the latest ideas, trends, and technologies that are taking us into the new millennium. Equipped with the knowledge the *Journal* provides we can move out of our "comfort zone" and become the advocates of a new generation of systems — systems focused on the "human" side of human resources. Thus freed from our bureaucratic, administrative past, we can become strategic business leaders in the new enterprise.

Karen V. Beaman
Editor-in-Chief, *IHRIM Journal*
Vice President, AGConsulting,
European Operations
Email: kbeaman@agconsult.com
Paris, France
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