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# From the Editor

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By Karen V. Beaman



With this issue of the *IHRIM Journal*, we close out the millennium. The last half of the 20th century will quintessentially be remembered as the electronic age. We have seen not only the development of the computer, but also experienced its evolution: from mainframes to personal computers, to client/server and now to the Web. In parallel, we have seen the evolution of HR and HRIS from a focus on the administration of personnel to the strategic management of human resources — the intellectual capital of the organization.

As we move into the new century, HR must continue to redirect its focus toward strategic HR management in order to create more effective human resource functions and systems. To improve the return on investment we are providing our organizations, we need to look to recent trends and best practices in the industry. The *IHRIM Journal's* unique combination of theory and practice is one source to help organizations reach that goal.

Our lead article in this issue is by Joe and Jimmie Boyett, authors of the best-selling *Workforce 2000*. Their article, "Human Resources' Most Effective Practice Across Best Companies," gives us examples of the basic components that companies are exploiting in implementing best HR practices. Their premise is that HR needs to take on a strategic role in the organization, to implement best practice policies and infrastructure and to lead the way in making the company an "employer of choice" organization.

Our second feature article, by John Johnston, "The Business Case for an Effective Human Resources Function (Or Yes, Virginia! HR Does Add Value)," argues that HR must provide evidence of a return on investment and measure its ability to improve the company's competitiveness. Johnston's findings show that the link between effective HR systems and effective HR departments is, at best, anecdotal. He concludes with observations on the limitations of today's HR departments in measuring their contribution to the organization.

Our next article looks at differences in work style and managerial practices between Western society and the Far East.

"Eliciting Opaque Opinions: A Vision Through Multinational Perspectives," by John Kidd and Xue Li, explores cultural differences in ethical norms, corruption and morality. They discuss the debate over *yi* and *li* — where *yi* is ethical value (justice) and *li* is economic value (profit). The authors evaluate approaches that clients and consultants worldwide must address if they are to proceed with confidence on a multinational project.

Aparna Joshi, an IHRIM Goldmacher scholar from Rutgers University, provides some insight into patterns of formal and informal interaction among individuals from diverse national, cultural, and linguistic groups. In "Networking Employees for Suc-

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cess in Global Teams: A Case Study," Joshi provides us with some recommendations for overcoming the barriers in managing global teams, such as fostering social networks, teamwork, team identity, cross-cultural training and proper e-mail protocol.

In "The Contribution of Human Resources Information Systems to the Strategic Management of Human Resources: A South African Perspective," Paul Krige provides an assessment on the South African HRIS situation. Krige's findings show that a large gap exists between the ideal HRIS and current systems in use in South Africa. He concludes with recommendations for both vendors and HR professionals as to how businesses can realize greater value from their HRIS investment.

The labor market has undergone a fundamental shift in its infrastructure brought on by online recruiting and digital technologies. In "Recruiting at the Speed of Light: Online Recruiting and the Impact of Global Electronic Markets for Human Resources," Nancy Paule Melone and Kathleen Hartzel

explore the strategic implications of electronic labor markets for recruiting and employee retention. The authors discuss how online recruiting amplifies the competitive environment and intensifies the pressure for aligning human resource activities for strategic impact and return on investment.

In "The Second Industrial Revolution: HRIS and Human Capital," Jim Candler postulates that we are entering the fourth generation of HRIS — the generation of "human capital automation." This new generation represents a significant departure from the traditional "productivity enhancements" of previous generations, and instead focuses on "people data" as the most important corporate commodity.

Bob Stambaugh brings us the fourth in his series on post-modern HR systems. His current article focuses on extensions that can be made to the post-modern model, in particular, "scenario planning" techniques, which can help us deal with the unknowns that we will inevitably face as we move to the "e-HR" generation.

We also introduce two new quarterly columns this issue: Ian Turnbull reports on the HRIS scene in Canada, and Jay Stright conducts strategic interviews with senior HR and IT executives. I'd also like to welcome three new members the *IHRIM Journal's* Editorial Advisory Board: Dr. Monica Belcourt from York University, Dr. Charles Fay from Rutgers University and Jenni Lehman from the GartnerGroup.

The *Journal* has evolved considerably since its inception two years ago. I'd like to thank our corporate sponsors and subscribers who have supported us through these first two years. We will be adding more sponsors to support our growth, as we continue to expand the *Journal* to become "your source" for global HR information knowledge for the 21st century.

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