

EXECUTIVE SUMMARIES

IHRIM Journal

March 2000

VISIONS OF THE FUTURE: HRIS — AS EASY AS BAKING A CAKE6

By Robert H. Stambaugh

In the late 1940s, products called “cake mixes” began to appear on the shelves of American stores. Consumers simply had to “add water” to make a cake. However, the products flopped — nobody wanted them. The underlying problem, it turned out, was that the mixes required no personal effort, and so consumers felt guilty. The solution was to refine the product so that it required the addition of eggs (for added flavor) and manual mixing (for personal consumer involvement). This article suggests that a fully automated HR function is in danger of falling into the same cake-mix trap. To meet consumer requirements, HRIS must deliver more than bland generalized solutions: a high-tech, high-touch approach is needed. A successful HRIS must deliver a more personalized touch, must engage the clients, and must provide localized flavor. The future of HRIS lies not in producing bland cake mixes, but in baking real cakes.

THE KNOWLEDGE-CREATING HRIS: LEARNING TO LIVE IN THE MESSY WORLD OF WORK8

By Robert H. Stambaugh

Like all hot topics, knowledge management (KM) has sprouted a number of competing, partially correct, but still inadequate definitions. Some vendors sell workflow packages as KM. Others offer data warehouses and tools for “mining” the data in those warehouses. What’s still missing is not only the understanding of how all this knowledge we are so busy managing is created in the first place, but also how we should refit our infrastructure to facilitate movement and display of our analyses and learnings. Without a framework for developing and applying these components of KM to the rapidly changing HR function, we can hardly aspire to a

more meaningful role in the business of the future. This article discusses some of the concepts that support the business of knowledge creation in today’s fast-paced and largely horizontal, networked organizations and introduces some of the early lessons about knowledge creation. Next, it applies some of the lessons learned elsewhere to the HR practice as it exists today, highlighting some current beliefs and processes that may actually inhibit knowledge creation. The article concludes with a few recommendations for developing a better HR-owned knowledge incubator in the future.

KNOWING IN COMMUNITY: 10 CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS IN BUILDING COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE19

By Richard McDermott, Ph.D.

Recent developments in information technology have led many companies to imagine a new source of cost savings and competitive advantage. By using the Internet and other new developments in information technology, they can link professionals across the globe, share documents, and compare different databases spread throughout the organization. But many companies are discovering that the real gold in knowledge management is not in distributing documentation or in combining databases. It is in sharing ideas and insights that are hard to articulate without knowing who is going to use them and for what purpose. Communities of practice are ideal vehicles for leveraging such “tacit” knowledge because they enable person-to-person interaction and engage a whole group in advancing their field of practice. As a result, they can spread the insight from that collaborative thinking across the whole organization. In this article, Richard McDermott identifies and describes ten factors, which are critical to the success of communities of practice.

MAKING CONNECTIONS27

By Chris Collison

BP Amoco is placing a premium on creating an environment where the right connections between people are made frequently and naturally. This article describes their approach to opti-

mize the flow of knowledge, reinforce a culture of sharing, and drive up levels of productivity. Connect is a corporate knowledge directory which helps the company “know what it knows”, thereby enabling them to attain performance levels which are greater than the sum of its parts. The underlying knowledge management philosophy is based on the premise that the best medium for knowledge is the human brain, and the best networking protocol is conversation. Given this premise, emphasis is placed upon generating the connection (making it easy to post information and search for it intelligently) and building the relationship (prompting for the right information to generate a conversation and the trust for a relationship). As the oil industry continues to adapt to harsh market conditions, the ability to harness the intellectual capacity of a rapidly evolving workforce will be a key competitive advantage.

THE ROLE OF HUMAN RESOURCES ORGANISATIONS IN EFFECTIVE KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMMES32

By Deborah L. Furey

Innovation, optimised performance, and customer intimacy are critical to success in the new millennium. Business leaders recognise that a key to achieving these goals is effective knowledge management (KM) the discipline of discovering and leveraging the insights, experience, and collective know-how of staff, partners and customers. As companies get smarter about knowledge and how to derive value from it, they’re realising that effective knowledge management is more than establishing a suite of knowledge repositories or databases. Pressed to deliver better performance, quicker response, and a higher proportion of competitive products and services, companies are implementing holistic knowledge management programmes that cut across all functional areas, encompassing and leveraging process experience, technology, staff expertise, and external influences from customers, suppliers and business partners. This article discusses the involvement of the human resources

function in successful KM programmes and the reasons that involvement is critical. Three specific roles for the human resources function are discussed including key actions and benefits for both HR strategies and KM programmes.

ORGANIZATIONAL KNOWLEDGE AS A WEB APPLICATION38
By Gary L. Durbin

Recent research shows that the most effective learning takes place in a community. The workplace is a community where knowledge is shared within the context of the work. In order for information systems to effectively impart knowledge, this concept of community must be part of the picture. With an understanding of the workplace community and the intelligence to effectively filter information, a web-based information system can help knowledge growth in the workplace. By combining information management with data about people and relationships, systems can become knowledge systems that deliver information in the context of the workplace. The proposition presented in this article is that one should consider an organization's goals and objectives as a knowledge base, and that by applying information processing models appropriate for such a knowledge base, one can dramatically improve the knowledge in the workplace community. The active knowledge management system pipes information along the human web creating knowledge through the interactions of community collaboration.

MANAGING HUMAN RESOURCES KNOWLEDGE: A FRAMEWORK FOR RESULTS43
By Tod Looffbourrow

Most HR executives and professionals think of knowledge management in a traditional sense, primarily the sharing of knowledge and use of intellectual capital across the enterprise. Yet, they manage a subset of organizational knowledge every day in serving employees, managers, retirees, insurance companies, benefits providers and other HR "customers." That HR knowledge applies and ex-

tends HR expertise across a company, providing personalized responses to a wide variety of questions or needs. Through the use of technology, HR knowledge can be made explicit and managed across the enterprise to better serve HR customers, enhance organizational productivity and help free HR for more strategic work. This article defines HR knowledge, where it comes from, and how you can manage and apply it across the organization to support communications, administrative processes/ transactions and interactive applications such as benefits selection and manager self-service. It also addresses the promise of HR knowledge distribution beyond the enterprise. The article concludes with some requirements for an effective solution and a challenge to HR to seize leadership in this kind of knowledge technology initiative for a more productive organization and a competitive advantage in recruiting, attracting, motivating and serving employees.

International Perspective - North America SCIENCE, CENTURIONS AND MODERN AMERICAN BUSINESS57
By Carl C. Hoffmann, Ph.D.

Spurred by rapid change in the world economy, the last five years has witnessed a great deal of effort to understand how organizations gather, disseminate and use knowledge. It can be argued that America's current success in the world economy is because our organizations adapt to changing markets and economics quickly. American companies gather vast amounts of competitive and technical information, assimilate it, and turn it into action. In other words, American companies have been successful because they learn quickly. Taking the view that knowledge management is not just knowing but also entails doing, this article surveys the tools, processes and concepts in the market today. Companies can gather, categorize, map, analyze, foster creation, teach and disseminate, but they also must execute. Knowledge management must have at least these components: knowledge creation, knowledge dissemination, and process change and measurement of its effect. Effective

knowledge management requires leadership to stir the knowledge pot and mix ideas from different communities of practice.

International Perspective - Canada CANADA - POSITIONED FOR SUCCESS61
By Ian Turnbull

Technology knows no borders. Innovation may begin in one nation, but the dynamics of the world economy dictate that technology follows economic growth. And, as dynamic as the growth of the Internet has been, it is still an emerging technology with huge untapped markets. As a nation of early adopters and the U.S.'s largest trading partner, Canada is positioned for success. But it is also positioned for failure as productivity lags, corporate offices move south, and so forth. Economics and the impact of changing demographics puts new demands on Canada's human resource management practices, and of necessity, its human resources management systems. Regardless of technology, people are the focus of success and organizations need flexible, creative systems and solutions to manage them in new and diverse ways.

International Perspective - Europe THE INVISIBLE LANDSCAPES OF EUROPE65
By Jackie Penticost

It is immensely important for any HRMS practitioner, particularly those undertaking global implementations, to understand the "invisible landscapes" of Europe — those groups tied together by the desire to trade, to legislate, to defend themselves, to tie their fortunes together as single "pseudo countries" by trade agreements, by legislative harmony, and by monetary union. Penticost's article discusses some of the invisible ties that bind Europe into communities of interest and the ways in which changes to those communities can affect human resources policies. Penticost helps us see under the skin of the European continent and to appreciate that Europe wears a coat of many colors and sizes depending on what questions you ask. In particular, the article

focuses on the EU's plans for expansion to 28 countries and the challenges of aligning countries that differ vastly in economic strength, demographics, health, welfare and use of technology.

International Perspective - Australasia
ASP GROWTH IN THE AUSTRALIAN MARKET AND SOME NEW LEGISLATION69

By John Macy

Australia is experiencing a growth in the application service provider (ASP) market and the rate of growth is one of the highest in the world. There are many reasons for this, but from a human resource application perspective the ASP love affair does not help solve some of the basic problems. In this article some of the unresolved issues are identified and some of the benefits of the ASP model are discussed. The article looks at new draft-stage legislation dealing with information usage and personal privacy. The catalyst that has aroused interest in privacy issues is the formation of a consortium to build a giant data warehouse on individuals. On the subject of legislation, the article discusses an Australian domestic issue in regard to illegal immigration and the increase in the number of "boat people" being smuggled into the northern part of Australia. The government response is to introduce legislation aimed at stopping employers giving jobs to the illegal immigrants and the article looks at the likely impact on HR systems.

International Perspective - Asia
JAPAN: DEALING WITH THE NEW REALITIES72

By Yumiko Christine Yokoi

Japan is well known for its lifetime employment and seniority wage system, components of management that supported businesses as its economy grew to become the world's second largest. Recently, globalization and deregulation have compelled companies to recognize the need to alter their ways. Human resources management has been slowly changing, and a number of the new methods are introduced here. Companies still primarily pay and promote employees based on seniority as well as potential, but in-

creasingly, compensation practices rewarding individuals based on performance can be observed in Japanese firms. It is understandably difficult to successfully implement these practices in a society where lifetime employment and emphasis on group performance have been the norm, and the adoption rate for these practices is still low, but it is expected to increase.

International Perspective: Africa
THE LIGHTS STAYED ON!
(NOW WE NEED TO LEARN TO USE THEM...)76

By Phillip Booth

Despite the feeling that the Y2K bug was over-hyped, many organisations now have excellent systems and skilled personnel in place. The opportunity is now to show how these investments can pay high dividends. And, nowhere else but Africa does the prospect of technology offer such rich rewards. Information technology is the primary enabler of the knowledge economy, and allows delivery of education, health, agriculture, industrial development and commerce more effectively throughout Africa. Perhaps the most important benefit that it offers, though, is the opportunity to focus on human capital development through the creation of standards and training, as well as broad access to learning and resources across the continent and, indeed, the globe.

International Perspective: Latin America
CONFLICTS ARISING OUT OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT78

By Julián Arturo de Diego

This article summarizes the basic aspects of sexual harassment in Latin America. This includes the growing awareness of this issue as well as its implications for employers. Specifically, it addresses how sexual harassment is defined in the Latin American context, what it encompasses and the policies more companies are adopting, which includes preventative measures and what to do when a harassment claim is made. Finally, it evaluates the measures generally adopted to separate the harasser and protect the victim.

ON THE KNOWLEDGE FRONTIER:
YOU CAN BUILD IT, BUT WILL THEY COME?80

By George M. Alliger and
 Scott I. Tannenbaum

New knowledge management (KM) initiatives, often ingenious and using state-of-the-art technology, are proliferating in the workplace. There are no reliable statistics of the percentages of those that ultimately succeed or founder. However, one real-world challenge that KM can face is, simply, lack of use. But lack of use may not signal lack of user interest. In today's workplace, people are busy, often harried. Under such circumstances, is the expectation that people will modify their working practices to include KM simply too much to ask? There are at least 10 major reasons why, even if you build a great KM system, users may not come. This article reviews what those reasons are, how to recognize them, and how to plan in advance to address them so that your KM initiative can be the success it deserves to be.

Working in the Connected World
BOOK NETWORK87

by Valdis Krebs

As we move from the industrial economy to the connected economy, we have to adjust our rules of thumb for sense-making and problem-solving. Many of the old rules just don't work anymore. In this article, Valdis Krebs looks at one of the leaders in the new economy — Amazon.com — and considers the various value-added information services that it provides to its customers. The concept of an "ego" and "alter" network of community interest is used to explore the links behind a web page and to see how highlighted books might be interconnected. In particular, we examine how online services could be enhanced, and how Amazon's competitors may "mine the data" which Amazon provides to its customers. From this case study, we derive new rules of thumb for the networked environment.

**Executive Views on HR Technology
INTERVIEW
WITH SKIP CULBERTSON91**
By Jay R. Stright

In the second of a regular series of articles relating to the topic "Managing people in a time of rapid change," Jay Stright interviews Skip Culbertson, who has held senior management positions within the HR function at Chevron corporation. This interview focuses on the effect that the information age is beginning to have on people management issues. Culbertson begins by a discussion centered on the recruitment, retention and motivation of knowledge workers and moves on to consider possible implications for corporate compensation policy. The impact of "pull" technology on training, knowledge dissemination and management autonomy is reviewed, and the importance of quick, easy access to better data across an organization is emphasized. Finally, Culbertson addresses the changing nature of organizational structures, and possible consequences for human resource management systems are explored. Is organizational structure really a route to business success — or is effective use of information the real key?

**Legal Update — United States:
THE ADMINISTRATIVE EXEMPTION
UNDER THE FAIR LABOR
STANDARDS ACT95**
By Edward Lee Isler, Esq.

The minimum wage and overtime requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) apply to most employees in the United States who do not otherwise fit within the Act's listed exemptions. To be exempt from these requirements, employees must be paid a salary and must perform duties exempt under one of the listed exemptions. The "salary basis" requirement was discussed in the December 1999 issue of the *IHRIM Journal*. This article addresses the second requirement, focusing in particular on the "administrative" exemption. The specifics of the Act with regard to administrative employees are discussed. To qualify for exemption, employees must exercise discretion in performing work directly related to the management and com-

pany business. Human resources professionals need to be aware of the subtleties of the FLSA in this area, and should consult legal counsel in difficult cases.

**HRIS Legal Update: Europe
IT'S GOOD TO TALK98**
By Phil Jones

The need for ongoing, honest and open communication is recognised as a key factor in successful and mutually beneficial relationships between individuals. This article argues that the same is true for corporate relationships between employers and employees. Reasons why the European Union (EU) has taken an interest in this issue are explored, and the development of the legal framework that now governs the formation of European Works Councils (EWCs) is reviewed. The method by which an EWC may be set up is discussed. Its potential size, mode of operation and the kind of issues it might debate, are summarised. It is suggested that — in the light of planned EU legislation to extend the principle to national (as opposed to transnational) companies — the nature of employee participation within Europe is undergoing a steep change. Companies operating within the EU need to be aware of their obligations regarding employee consultation.

**HRIS Case Study:
LEADING THE RACE101**
By Joel R. Lapointe

This case study (the third in a series) again focuses on the activities of the HRIS strategic planning committee. Three strategic goals have been agreed. These are to align HRIS initiatives with business objectives focus on the attraction, development and retention of talent leverage the Internet/intranet as the key technology enabler. The organization's executive committee has launched a "customer confidence" initiative and identified products to be developed. Success will be dependent on the human element and HR will be active in executing corporate strategy. This installment examines individual perspectives as members discuss how to proceed. Issues considered include: (1) departmental

Web site consolidation; (2) enterprise portal characteristics and challenges; (3) an overarching theme for setting application priorities; (4) trade-offs between efficiency-based initiatives and other business drivers; (5) development of functional leadership buy-in; and, (6) performance measurement based upon "progress indicators."

BOOK REVIEWS105
By Valdis Krebs

As KM has grown as a field of interest amongst scholars and practitioners, so has the tide of books proclaiming KM's benefits. But what is this world of knowledge management all about? How does it work? How can we take advantage of it? What is the competition doing? Does it really add value? Consulting firms of all shapes and sizes claim to have THE answer to all of these questions. Some consultants push technology-driven approaches; others claim that people-driven methodologies are superior and others argue for a mixture of both approaches. Executives who wish to acquire some expertise of their own in this field may, therefore, like to consider one or more of the books compared and contrasted in this article: *Working Knowledge* by Thomas Davenport and Laurence Prusak; *InfoSense* by Keith Devlin; and, *The Knowing-Doing Gap* by Jeffrey Pfeffer and Robert I. Sutton.



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AUTHORS' GUIDELINES

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The IHRIM *Journal* content is specifically written for executive management and senior-level human resource and information technology leadership (e.g., CEOs, CIOs, VPs, and Directors), university professors and students, and other current or emerging thought leaders and visionaries.

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The goals of the IHRIM *Journal* are to be:

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FOOTNOTES:

Books

1 Robert K. Wysocki, Robert Beck, Jr., and David B. Crane, *Effective Project Management* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1995), p. 10.

Magazine Articles

2 John Kelly, "Distance Education: Closer Than You Think!," *IHRIM.link*, February/ March 1999, pp. 14-22.

Journal Articles

3 Robert H. Stambaugh, "Cones of Silence: The HR Systems 'Body of Knowledge' and the Real HRIS Ecosystem," *IHRIM Journal*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1998, pp. 22-29.

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Closer Than You Think!" *IHRIM.link*, February/ March 1999, pp. 14-22.

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Stambaugh, Robert H. "Cones of Silence: The HR Systems 'Body of Knowledge' and the Real HRIS Ecosystem." *IHRIM Journal*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1998, pp. 22-29.

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