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# From the Editors

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By Joel Lapointe and Karen Beaman



This issue of the *IHRIM Journal* was developed by Guest Editor Joel Lapointe, head of the strategic management practice for The Hunter Group. Lapointe has collected a series of articles written from industry, consulting and vendor perspectives that offer insight and diverse opinions on analyzing, measuring, building and sustaining a “high performance workforce.”

Jay Stright and David Goodman have added a third article to their recent series in the *IHRIM Journal*: “Technology in HR: How Knowledge can Narrow the Gap Between Technological Innovation and its Widespread Use.” Their current article highlights an opportunity for a new technology direction for human resources. It suggests transforming HR from a transaction-centric to a human-

immediate delivery of shareholder value and sustaining the long-term viability of their organizations. Having tackled most other “improvement” initiatives, one of the last opportunities to truly maximize value creation lies in the hands of people. The human resource department is the linchpin to building a strategy-focused organization. The article also addresses the role of the human resources group in human capital value creation and walks through the process of engaging each and every employee in your organization to ensure the achievement of your business objectives.

Susan Hayden’s article, “Maximizing the Knowledge Supply Chain for the High Performance Knowledge Worker,” develops the themes of B2E (Business to Employee) and the power of employee portals as the delivery mode for the “knowledge supply chain.” Hayden raises and answers several significant questions. How can we leverage self-service, business intelligence, and role-based tools to enable our employees to tailor their information experience to their specific needs? Do we have the means to equip today’s knowledge worker with the information, knowledge, and data for ultimate performance? Answers rely on the emerging B2E automation strategies that can enhance the performance of today’s knowledge worker.

“Building the Right Workforce Strategy with Analytical Applications,” by Norma Penson and Tracy Martin, presents a perspective that argues that the information backbone that is available within our enterprise systems provides a wealth of data from which workforce strategies can be formulated, analyzed and measured. The authors present the compelling viewpoint: to connect the business strategy with the talent in the workplace, companies need to align, engage and measure their people strategy. Organizations must also focus on the value-add activities of their workforce. Is the function this employee performing contributing to the

## *... today’s business executives find themselves torn between the immediate delivery of shareholder value and sustaining the long-term viability of their organizations.*

As we enter 2001, the intense pressure of our Y2K projects has all but faded away. Rather than being overwhelmed by a calendar compliance crisis, HRMS practitioners are developing strategic plans that seek to derive improved return on investment and new value from our enterprise systems investments while leveraging the power of the Internet to improve employee effectiveness and organizational competitive advantage. The “Talent War,” caused by the lowest knowledge-worker unemployment rates ever seen, is being waged with new emphasis on recruitment automation to source candidates and the resurgence of knowledge, skill and talent development initiatives to ensure high performance workforces. A myriad of approaches and technology-based solutions are emerging which are directed at this “high performance workforce agenda.”

This issue includes nine feature articles, written from industry, consulting and product vendor perspectives that offer insight and diverse opinions about multiple aspects of what has been done and what can be done to analyze, measure, establish, build, and sustain the high performance workforce.

capital-centric value proposition. The authors offer a path to apply today’s massive computing power to the key issues facing business leaders in the emerging knowledge workplace — the discovery, quantification and application of human performance variables to dramatically impact business results.

Nick Messerschmidt focuses specifically on the HRIS function in his article “Major Keystones in Building High Performance HRIS Teams.” The author addresses a common dilemma prevalent in the corporate world today: “What should I know and what should I be doing to attract and keep key employees?” The article provides practical concepts and ideas that HRIS managers can use to retain and develop key staff. Messerschmidt incorporates his own insights and experiences into this article to help us effectively accomplish the HRIS mission in today’s world.

In “Value Creation Through Human Capital: The Role of the Human Resource Organization,” Todd D’Attoma addresses the need to create linkages between corporate strategies and employee behaviors. D’Attoma develops the premise that today’s business executives find themselves torn between the

overall profitability of the enterprise? Are we developing a workforce we will need tomorrow? Are they costing too much and if so, how could we adjust activities to reduce waste? Analytical applications that access our enterprise information sources, as well as external comparative/competitive content, are quickly becoming the accepted standard to solving these questions.

Michael Campbell has authored the article: "Enterprise Portals, Organizational Change and the Employee Experience: Workforce Management at Internet Speed." Campbell writes that the new digital technologies and the Internet have fundamentally changed the workplace: how and where we do our work, the kinds of tools available to help us as we work, and the way we divide our time between work and personal life. Human resource organizations are called upon to redefine their own role within the company. At the same time, they are asked to manage and measure the changes that technology brings to a company's workforce. Enterprise portals capture the power and potential of the Internet, not just to maximize business efficiencies, but also to redefine, restructure and revalue the employee experience, a key responsibility of the human resource organization in the Internet economy.

In his article, "Moving From Measurement to Action: An Intranet-Based Process for Dissemination of Best Practices," Steven Kirn provides a discussion of how Sears, Roebuck and Company is leveraging its intranet to improve organizational performance. Sears, Roebuck and Co. created its own balanced scorecard for business performance, building a set of operational measures for its vision of becoming a "compelling place to work, shop and invest". These measures have been linked empirically through several years of research, demonstrating a clear connection among the company's efforts at creating a satisfying and stimulating work environment, the shopping experience and satisfaction of its customers and, ultimately, Sears' financial performance. In this article, Kirn details how Sears has created an intranet-based reporting system for the

"three compelling", otherwise known as its total performance indicators. Further, the site immediately links users to a library of over 800 best practices known to characterize stores with either superior or greatly improved performance on a variety of the assessment dimensions. Thus, managers are able to immediately connect an identified problem or improvement opportunity with practical action tools contributed by other store managers.

In "Knowledge Management that Drives Global Strategy: Creating The KWorld Knowledge Environment At KPMG," Gary Abramson describes the internal KPMG knowledge management project that has established an environment known as KWorld — a messaging, knowledge-sharing and collaboration environment whose architecture is both the product and the catalyst of fundamental change within this global consultancy. Abramson asserts that nearly every expert on knowledge is quick to offer this statement: knowledge management is not about technology. While this statement is true, Abramson argues that it bears refining. Technology is important. Carefully selected and designed technologies inevitably become the connective tissue in any organization that hopes to identify and build upon its intellectual capital. The potential of Web technologies is great; considering where we were only a few years ago, they are magical. It is just that technology by itself is only one piece of a solution.

The insights and observations that Abramson makes about KWorld are a great source of lessons learned about how effective knowledge management can become the cornerstone for knowledge worker high performance.

And last but not least, in "Building a World Class Workforce: Getting Personal with Employee Self-Service," Tod Loofbourrow, addresses the need for companies to educate their employees on the true value of their health and welfare benefits, both monetary and service-related, and on the policies and expectations of the organizations they work for. Doing so, he says, is not only cost-effective, but is a significant factor in em-

ployee retention, one of the cornerstones for building a world class workforce. Employing a case study of the Wells Fargo/Norwest merger, Loofbourrow also discusses how e-workforce communications can help smooth over culture clashes in corporate mergers. Finally, Loofbourrow addresses how e-workforce communications can assist telecommuters.

In addition to this impressive set of feature articles, we have our regular lineup of quarterly columns and international perspectives. We are sorry to say that after this issue, Drs. Scott Tannenbaum and George Alliger will be taking a break from their column, "On the Knowledge Frontier," which has regularly appeared in the *Journal* for the last two years. Their articles from the *Journal* have been collected and republished by IHRIM Press, so look for their book on *Knowledge Management* from the IHRIM Web site. IHRIM would like to extend the sincerest of thanks to Drs. Tannenbaum and Alliger for providing us with a broad and thorough understanding of this very important topic.

The IHRIM *Journal* always strives to keep you up to date on the current issues in human capital management and the latest technologies that support our evolution to improve administrative efficiencies and help HR become a strategic business partner in the organization — moving out of the backroom and into the boardroom. In the next issue, we will be introducing a new quarterly column by John Johnston on e-HR, which will focus on HR and HRIS issues in the digital age.

As always, keeps those cards and letters coming!

#### **Joel Lapointe**

Guest Editor, *IHRIM Journal*  
Senior Vice President, The Hunter Group  
E-mail: JRL@CAPE.com  
Baltimore, MD USA

#### **Karen V. Beaman**

Editor-In-Chief, *IHRIM Journal*  
Vice President/General Manager,  
ADP/AGConsulting  
E-mail: KBeaman@AGConsult.com  
Portland, Oregon USA  
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