



*Steve Secora is an HRIS analyst at WMS Gaming, Inc, a manufacturer of gaming and slot machine technology. He currently is serving on the IHRIM.link Editorial Committee and on the Midwest Affinity Group board. During his 10-year career in Human Resources, he has worked at companies ranging from 200 to 15,000 employees. He is a graduate of the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire and is currently working on his M.B.A. at DePaul University in Chicago.*

Steve Secora, Guest Editor

This issue focuses on the needs of small to midsize businesses regarding how the HRIS function works within the constraint of smaller companies. For the purposes of definition, we have quantified small to midsize firms as companies that have 5,000 employees or less. While a somewhat arbitrary number, it provided a defined line for our authors.

Having spent the majority of my career working for small to midsize companies, I jumped at the opportunity to work on this issue. I've had a lot of experience working for smaller companies and have felt that they don't always get the attention that they need. As guest editor, my task was to make sure that we got that attention, but that doesn't mean that the articles in this issue should be ignored by the larger companies. In fact, I hope that larger firms learn from this issue what smaller firms are accomplishing, often with less headcount and lower budgets.

As many of us know, working at a small or midsize company can sometimes feel like being on an island. There are precious few resources that are allocated to the HRIS function and they usually reside in one or two experts. Many times, these people didn't start off as HRIS experts, but inherited the positions due to the fact that they were technologically savvy contributors in the HR department. In Sybll Romley's article, "The Rock," she provides a guide to locking down your HRIS island as tight as Alcatraz. This article is a must read for those of us who have not had formal IT security training.

Michael Gerthe continues the island theme in an article titled "Islands of Information," where he discusses all of

those legacy systems that have sprouted up out of Access databases and Excel spreadsheets. How do these solutions get legs in the first place and why do they stick around for so long after their inventors have left the department? In this article, you'll find the answers to both of those questions.

Next, we take a trip into the business process outsourcing (BPO) zone. This practice, also known as human resources outsourcing (HRO), can be confusing and really hard to build a business case for at small and midsize companies. The cost savings that are inherent in HRO for larger companies aren't always there for smaller companies. Tim Hughes' article "Beyond Cost Savings" builds the HRO case beyond the baseline numbers and explains why HRO can be a wise business decision for smaller companies.

Since we have defined small to midsize companies as any company with less than 5,000 employees, we actually have a vague definition of the grouping. There is obviously a strata within the 1-5,000 employee companies. What works for a 100 employee company, may not work for a 5,000 employee company. Dusty Rhodes' article "You Know Your Options . . ." looks further into the HRO market and breaks down HRO options by the size of a company.

David Salyers brings an interesting perspective in his "In My Opinion" column focusing on business intelligence solutions, and Anne Clifford provides a thoughtful piece titled "Privacy Implication: Production-quality data in Test Environments."

If you're a fan of case studies, you'll enjoy the article by Genice Turner and France Lampron titled "Automating

Turnover." They review a case study where the Lahey Clinic is faced with the challenge of decentralizing reporting and how they met that challenge working with various vendor products.

Raghav Singh looks into how technology can help HR departments win the all-valuable "Seat at the Table." As he explains in his article, talent management technology can be a big part of getting your department to be respected by company executives.

No matter how hard we try, HR data will inevitably end up in an Excel spreadsheet for one reason or another. Sometimes, it's just to generate reports for the Finance and Accounting groups, who often live and breathe in Excel, but it can often be a useful tool for the HRIS staff. The article by Sam Lin and Gerald Falkowski gives you tips and tricks to help you deal with your HR data in Excel spreadsheets. This article provides common HR data scenarios and new ways to use Excel to solve your data problems.

Finally, we talk with Andy Cohen about the specific challenges that small and midsize companies face when working with talent management. He provides a good guide on how to get started and how to avoid the common pitfalls that growing companies can experience.

I'd like to thank David Moore, department editor for this issue, for his work and dedication. He acquired excellent department articles and helped with the coordination of the content in this issue. At IHRIM, we really do appreciate the thoughtfulness and generosity of all of our volunteers who have graciously given their time and their knowledge. Thank you all and enjoy the issue!