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Guest Editor

Like many of you, I suspect, I find myself well, if not addicted, at least more riveted than I ever thought I'd be by the new spate of how-to and design-related "reality" shows on television. I find myself flipping to The Learning Channel, HGTV, and BBC America (and their ilk) more and more often these days. I think there's a link between my enthusiasm for that kind of television watching and the eagerness with which I await each bi-monthly delivery of *IHRIM.link*. Don't get me wrong: there are obvious essential differences between TLC and *IHRIM.link*, even beyond the vast contrast in topic areas. For instance, I don't remember ever encountering anyone I thought was babbling silly nonsense or pulling dumb pranks in *IHRIM.link*. But I do get some good ideas from the shows just as I do from our magazine, and ultimately it's up to me to assess and choose the value to my organization of what I read about HR systems and approaches in *IHRIM.link*, just as it is for me to decide what (if anything) the examples I see on television can do for my home or my wardrobe.

In that spirit, this issue's articles are intended to provide us with some thought-provoking material to help us assess approaches and tactics for the organizations in which we work. "Creating and Executing a Successful e-HR Strategy" by Kurt Schmidt sets the theme with its statement of the role of an e-HR strategy as a means to "boost productivity, reduce costs and drive long-term performance throughout the entire organization" – the business equivalent of

helping ourselves to live more comfortable and stylish lives. It provides a how-to primer with step-by-step approaches for establishing such a strategy, and a concise listing of the benefits to be obtained by doing so. Like the television show "What Not to Wear," Schmidt gives us an e-HR equivalent of "the rules," so we can ensure that we're not just jumping off into haphazard, un-coordinated projects. Schmidt's approach helps us ensure that the projects we choose to prioritize within our organizations ultimately turn out to be wise investments that will work well with the overall picture for years to come and make our organizations look their best. We may not be able to literally throw out our old systems and HR technology initiatives the way they do with old wardrobes on the television show, but we can certainly establish a framework to ensure that the new stuff we bring in will help HR in our organizations perform more effectively today and in the future.

Bob Lupp's "Internal Shared Services: Business Drivers and Challenges" gives us a step-by-step approach to follow in deciding whether to implement internal shared services. Lupp takes us through the first steps in deciding whether an internal shared services approach fits for our organizations through a consideration of relevant business drivers, followed by an exploration of their viability using a straightforward decision tree. He then explains the key challenges inherent in implementing shared services, and finally explores two key considerations in their implementation: Pricing and Service Level Agreements. This is the approach taken by television shows like "Hometime" or "This Old House." This approach of exploring what to expect - and what not to expect - along

the journey and at its conclusion exemplifies what most of us want most from our professional memberships in organizations like IHRIM: the ability to learn from the experience and expertise of others who have been there already and know what to look out for.

Our third feature article, "Seven (Free) Things Employers Can Do to Improve Background Screening," written by Barry Nadler, is our "Design on a Dime" analogue. We can accomplish a lot that will add great value to our organizations (or our homes) with little or no expense, if we know where to look. When experts like Nadler provide their perspective, we're far better able to see the opportunities that have been there all along!

This issue's department articles – Jason Averbrook's "Planning for Uncertainty," Robert Morgan's Management Perspective article, Chuck Allen's Tech Notes piece on XML's assessment specification, and the Talking With interview with Richard S. Hubbard of Watson Wyatt, are the highly useful "How 2 Crew" components of this issue's programming. By stepping in and showing us some of the best ways to get things done in our organizations, they help us avoid – or get "unstuck" from – projects that might otherwise go awry.

To stretch the metaphor to the breaking point, I guess I'm the Paige Davis of this issue, providing the narrative thread. Others play essential roles in the background; and especially Kristie Evans who did a magnificent job as our Department Editor (with able guidance from David Salyers and Shelley Buck), keeping us all in line and paying invaluable attention to the details required to get the show on the air - or, in this case, the magazine in your mailbox.