

HR Edge

Winter 2014

THE MAGAZINE OF LEADING EDGE IDEAS IN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

GOING GLOBAL



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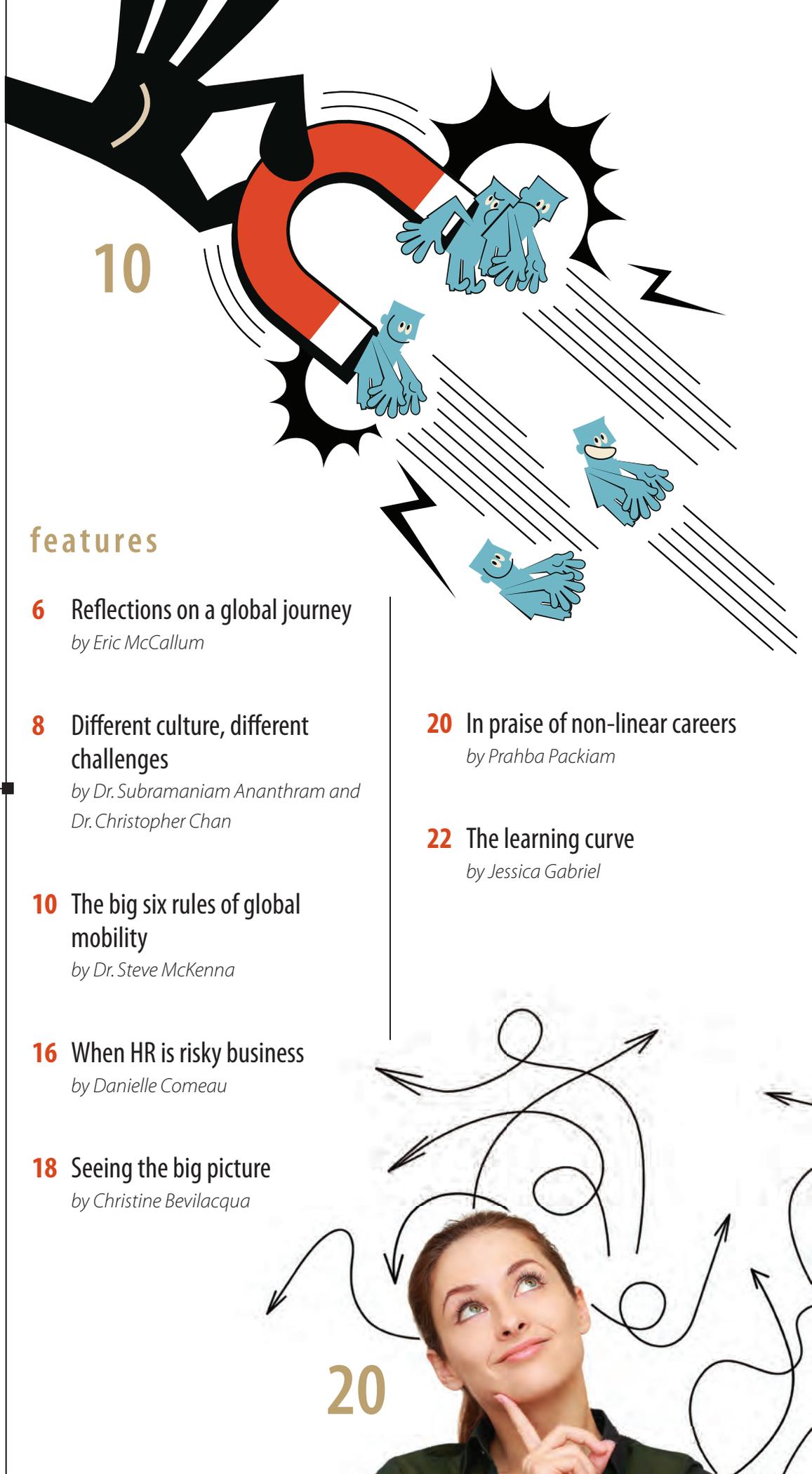
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Moving forward: a collective vision

Outgoing message from our immediate past Director



Dr. Parbudyal Singh
is the immediate past
Director, School of Human Resource
Management, York University,
Toronto, Canada

As the outgoing Director of the School of Human Resource Management, Canada's leader in HRM education, I have had a glorious opportunity to work with some of the best people on- and off-campus. I truly value all the friendships this position has brought my way and the relationships we have built together for the benefit of our students.

We have continued to make steady progress with our undergraduate and certificate programs. The quality of students has improved and more students are going on to their fourth year in the BHRM program (honours). The HRM Certificate program, which allows students to take all the required courses required for CHRP certification, has grown to be one of the largest certificate programs at York University.

The MHRM program continues to make us proud. Many of our graduates now hold senior positions in major Canadian organizations and others are making huge leaps in their careers. And we are also proud to announce that our young doctoral program has now produced our first graduating students: Dr. Angus Duff, Dr. Al-Karim Samnani, and Dr. Laxmikant

Manroop. All have accepted full-time positions as university professors in Human Resource Management.

Our faculty members conduct not only cutting-edge research but they are also outstanding teachers. For the 2013/14 academic year, we will be strengthened by two outstanding new hires to our faculty: Dr. Jing Wang and Dr. Christa Wilkin. Dr. Wang is joining us from the Sobey School of Business, St. Mary's University; she completed her PhD from University of Toronto. Dr. Wilkin, who obtained her PhD from McMaster University, is leaving California State University to be with us.

Finally, I want to welcome my dear colleague, Professor Marie Budworth, as the incoming Director of the School of HRM. I am confident that with Marie's wealth of leadership experience, her commitment to academic excellence, and her integrity, our school will continue to thrive and grow in the best possible directions.

Best wishes,

Parbudyal

... with continuous improvement



Dr. Marie-Hélène Budworth is the Director, School of Human Resource Management, York University, Toronto, Canada

Incoming message from our new Director

The School of Human Resource Management has enjoyed significant achievements over the past few years largely due to the efforts of our faculty under the leadership of our outgoing Director, Dr. Parbudyal Singh and his predecessor, Dr. Monica Belcourt. We are all grateful to these individuals for creating a vibrant, research focused community of scholars committed to a common goal. I am personally grateful to Dr. Singh and Dr. Belcourt for setting us on a clear course. It is my intention to continue moving us toward our collective vision during my term as Director.

As a school, our goal is to be the leader in HRM scholarship in Canada. With a complete suite of programs, from the Bachelor's degree to the Master's to the PhD in Human Resource Management, we are already a major force in this field. We have a research-intensive faculty, a lively undergraduate program, engaged Masters' students, and promising future scholars in our PhD program.

Over the next few years, we will aim to sharpen and refine our programs in response to the changing needs of both research and practice. This includes building our internship program in order to provide our undergraduate students with greater opportunities to gain practical experience while completing their degree. We will continue to experience growth in our Master's program. This fall we received a record number of applicants. We are delighted that our Master's

program attracts so many talented HR professionals. Our relatively young PhD program has been equally successful. It has educated young scholars who have since gone on to obtain tenure-track positions in universities. It will continue to develop new generations of impressive HR scholars.

Finally, I would like to express our collective appreciation to Dr. Len Karakowsky and Dr. Ken McBey for their continuing leadership with this magazine. The HR Edge provides us with an opportunity to share our achievements with our broader community. I hope that all of our readers will enjoy this publication and reach out to us directly if anything in particular catches your interest.

Sincerely,

Marie

As a school, our goal is to be the leader in HRM scholarship in Canada.

by Eric McCallum



Reflections on a GLOBAL journey



It's a small world. And it's getting smaller.

World economies are becoming increasingly integrated. What happens at one end of the world can often reach us at the other end in no time at all. For business, the notion of “think global, act local” is more important now than ever. All this should remind us that HR needs to be a big part of the global “equation” in a business.

There is no doubt that globalization is having a profound impact on the human resources profession. From international mergers to cross cultural training, it is critical for HR professionals to educate themselves on the implications of globalization for both their industry and for the business they support. I believe strongly that the

HR profession must move beyond transactional support of the business and become more proactively involved in navigating the global challenges ahead.

So how does a dedicated HR professional increase their global savvy? The answer is simple—go global.

For some, who may have a little wanderlust and curiosity, taking their career international is a challenging and exciting opportunity. We are lucky that the skills of HR are transferrable between industries and in many aspects, across national borders. However, it takes experience and practice to hone these skills into competitive assets.

When I reflect back on making the original decision to move internationally, from the US to Canada, I recall a simple statement that provided the mental shift and push needed. My brother-in-law, a Stanford PhD, shared a comment that Don Kennedy, President of Stanford University and a botanist, said to him—“Sometimes we just do better after we’ve been “re-potted”. In other words, a change in context can present an opportunity to break out of our comfort zone, and experience rapid professional as well as personal growth. In my case, it also helped satisfy that sense of wanderlust in a profound way.

Back in 2009, when I was a student in York's MHRM program, I was also in the midst of making a major work transition at the time. I had just moved from one employment context in the U.S. to a completely different HR role in Canada. It was potentially a very risky move given the economic conditions in 2009. That decision exposed me to a new industry, new geographies, and new business challenges. Ultimately, it offered both personal and professional growth opportunities.

I have been lucky to work for international companies (based in Canada) that have allowed the opportunity to be exposed to HR responsibilities in 22 countries, on 5 continents, with 13 different languages. Admittedly, while those opportunities have involved extensive business travel, I always returned to the comfort and familiarity of my home base in Toronto. That is, until now.

My recent global journey arose in the company for which I have been serving as *Vice President, Talent Management & Organization Effectiveness*—Kinross Gold Corporation. Over the years at Kinross, I have been challenged with helping craft the company's HR strategy and designing an integrated HR system that engages our employees and delivers business results and shareholder value. I have had the pleasure of taking on a variety of challenges and embracing them all. Recently, I was offered another challenge that I also saw as a great opportunity.

In February 2012, I accepted an offer for a two year assignment based in Santiago, Chile as the Vice Presidente de Recursos Humanos Sudamérica. This new position was created as part of a company-wide organization design change to regionalization from a more corporate-centric organization model. This position consolidated HR leadership for the three countries where we operate in South America (Chile, Brazil and Ecuador). In this position, I am responsible for ensuring that all aspects of HR and Labour Relations are implemented in compliance with the local laws, international conventions and Kinross values and standards.

It is a very different experience living and working in a country with a different language, culture, history, practices, laws, etc. How each country values time, work and family is very different and it forces you to challenge your assumptions and paradigms.

My family is greatly enjoying the experience of learning a new language, traveling throughout South America (Patagonia, Machu Picchu, Galapagos Islands), eating new foods, adapting to new cultures, making new friends. My son has adjusted brilliantly and is thriving in an international school with over 50 countries rep-

A change in context can present an opportunity to break out of our comfort zone, and experience rapid professional as well as personal growth.

resented. My wife joined a hiking club and is taking Spanish lessons. Even our dog is enjoying walks in the always perfect weather of Santiago.

One big challenge is bringing expats, primarily from North America, to South American countries and helping them effectively integrate and add value. Most companies have not done an effective job of developing their employees and leaders for the rigors of an international assignment and therefore, the employees are likely to try what has worked for them in their local or national roles which may or may not be successful in their new environment. There are so many potential frustrations for them, their families and their employees and it is critical to ensure the transition is smooth and the improvements made are sustainable after they leave.

An international assignment may not be right for everyone. It depends on interest, career aspirations and many other factors. However, if you are interested in an international career, helping your current company be prepared for the inevitable march of globalization or just accelerated personal growth, I highly recommend it. It really is a small world, after all.

Saludos.

Eric McCallum (MRHM 2010) is Vice President, Talent Management & Organization Effectiveness at Kinross Gold Corporation.



by Dr. Subramaniam Ananthram and Dr. Christopher Chan

different culture different challenges



What do HR executives with global responsibilities find most challenging and how are they dealing with those challenges?

Organizations across the globe realize that HR needs to be treated not just as a support function and a cost center but more as a strategic business partner and a profit center. As the role and function of HR becomes more strategic, especially in multinational corporations, practitioners need to better understand the nature and challenges of international assignments.

We recently interviewed 26 Canadian and U.S. HR executives with global responsibilities in order to get a better sense of the pressing challenges faced by global human resource executives and the strategies that are used to address those challenges. These executives worked in a variety of industries, including airlines, accounting, banking and finance, business consulting, consumer goods, health care, information and communications technology, mining, and pharmaceutical.

Here are a few of the most critical recurring themes that we found—the challenges that can arise and the organizational responses necessary to address them.

Standardization versus localization

At the strategic level, the primary challenge for the HR executives is to balance the often conflicting standardization and localization requirements. With MNCs operating across geographic boundaries in different continents, the executives recognize that standardization of HR policies and practices may not be possible because of social, cultural and political differences.

HR executives may also need to deal with foreign industrial relations. Given that various nations have different labor legislation, the executives explained that it was important for them to be frequently updated with labor legislation changes in different contexts. They also explained that the roles played by unions and the degree of union influence in different countries can affect the attention paid to negotiation with the labor unions. Clearly, complete standardization of policies and practices might not be possible while negotiating with labor unions in different contexts.

How can organizations mitigate these challenges? At the strategic level, fostering a stronger partnership with the subsidiaries was crucial to ensure consistency in global strategy formulation and implementation. The executives also mentioned that this consistency allowed them to remain strategically agile by being flexible to customize to meet local demands, depending on the type of industry they were involved in.

As part of fostering a stronger partnership between the home and host entity, expatriates and host country executives are rotated so that they have a deeper understanding of the global business and also cultivate a 'global mindset'—an attitude that enables them to perceive globaliza-

tion as vital to their organization. Integrating a diversity focus into the recruitment and selection of expatriates is a strategy that is often used.

Cross cultural differences and adjustment demands

At the personal level, a common theme that has arisen is difficulty with adjustment of an expatriate in the host country. There may be many reasons for poor adjustment. Flexibility and work-family balance issues were reported to be linked to the expatriate's adjustment. Expatriation often involves relocating the family members of the manager especially for long term assignments. Usually coupled with a steep learning curve, expectation to perform and deliver results within a tight schedule can often encourage the expatriate to work longer hours. Consequently, expatriates and their family members may experience a compromised work-family balance under those conditions.

Given that the expatriates are representing the head office, they are expected to be knowledgeable and sensitive about global issues. The executives that we interviewed explained that cultural differences are most visibly experienced in terms of different work styles. This makes it imperative for executives to develop relevant cross-cultural communication skills. In our discussions, these HR professionals explained that leadership competencies are developed through on-the-job training and development and job rotation.

Other issues pertinent to leadership development include the cultivation of situational awareness that is rooted in cultural sensitivity, namely, open mindedness and adaptability. Individuals who have had experiences with living in different countries and who are multilingual are perceived to be more open minded because of such experience. One executive stated that job rotation and putting people in 'other's shoes' would give them a different perspective on others' roles and assist in developing open mindedness. In our interviews, respondents often indicated that the notion of open mindedness is not just about accepting diversity but also embracing it—a key element of successful expatriate integration.

At the organizational level, there is a huge emphasis on cross cultural training and development for the expatriates. Training and development are generally provided through rotation globally so that the executives are exposed to various cultures and experience the similarities and differences. Adjectives such as 'sensitive', 'understanding', and 'knowledgeable' were used to describe the kind of culturally intelligent expatriates that the firms sought to develop. Although experiential training was touted as the ideal form of training by sending the managers overseas on foreign assignments, sometimes in-house training and testing are also used.

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by Dr. Steve McKenna

the **Big Six**

rules of global mobility



**Attracting, retaining
and developing globally
mobile executives**

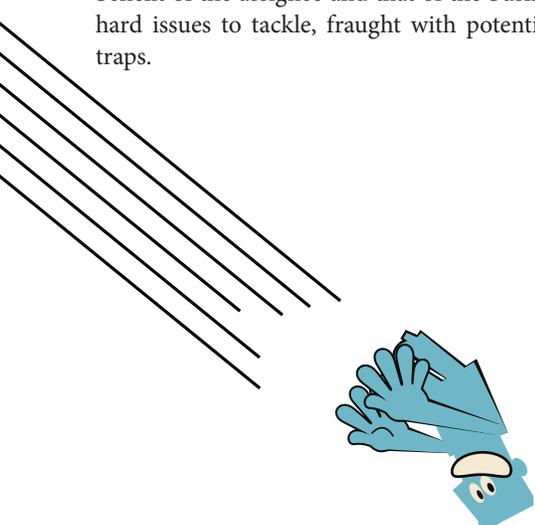
In recent years the issue of global mobility has become one of the key strategic business and human resource problems for global companies. Companies continue to have a high need for managers and professionals to be mobile throughout global business operations. In addition, companies are seeking creative solutions to the high costs of international assignments through the development and use of alternative mechanisms and approaches to global mobility.

Research indicates, however, that while globally mobile executives and professionals are critical for the expansion, development and maintenance of international business activity, attracting and retaining individuals for assignments are not easy. Creating a cadre of globally mobile cosmopolitans whose whole career is based on mobility is one answer to the problem. Yet there are still questions concerning how best to attract talented individuals to globally mobile roles and how to build their affiliation to an organization such that they can be retained.

My research on these topics, and a synthesis of the research of others, has led to the identification of a number of key factors, which connect to the attraction and retention of talented cosmopolitans.

Contemporary issues in international assignments

In a broad sense research indicates that attracting and retaining talented professionals and executives for global assignments is a major issue for companies. In addition, there are three other concerns that appear to consume companies: the performance of assignees and in particular, their return on investment (RoI); the development of assignees for future global opportunities and; how an organization can capture the learning of assignees for the benefit of the assignee and that of the business. These are hard issues to tackle, fraught with potential pitfalls and traps.



To deal with these issues, my research indicates that a number of key factors have an important connection with attracting talented individuals for assignments, building their affiliation and retention, developing their global capabilities, capturing the learning acquired while on assignment and, the overall performance of the assignee. This is particularly the case when dealing with high-potential individuals, the future elite of organizational leadership who will be mission-critical for a global business in its future. Such individuals need to be attracted to global mobility as well as predisposed towards it. They have needs that have to be met in order to create a compelling reason to 'stick around'. They will need to 'feel' constant development and that what they learn is put to good business use. These individuals are highly self-motivated, so global human resource management people need to know how to fire up this potential.

The Big Six

Research indicates that there are six factors which are key to attracting, retaining, developing, and enhancing the performance of assignees.



Involvement. Individuals, excited by the prospect of global mobility and who are high-performers, need to be involved in the way assignments are shaped. Co-constructing assignments in this way ensures that assignees are engaged fully in the process from the beginning, have clear expectations, and a transparent sense of where the assignment will lead to in terms of their learning and development. The attraction and retention of stellar talent for global assignments are partly related to the involvement that they have in shaping the nature of the assignment itself.



Challenge. Top people need top challenges. Top companies always send their best people on global assignments, not their second best. Global companies realize the importance of their global operations and the increasing importance of exposing future leaders to the global business.

Top performers also realize the importance of being challenged, and in fact, expect to be completely challenged in their assignments. The days of the global assignee (the expatriate) being sent overseas as a preface to retirement are long gone.

THE BIG SIX continued page 12

Global competition requires that companies compete at the top of their game everywhere. Challenging assignments attract, help retain and develop the assignee. In addition, the individual learns and the business learns from these challenges.



3 Autonomy. Top global talent want autonomy and discretion in undertaking their assignments. They know what they have to do and they want to get on and do it. Autonomy is different from support. Autonomy relates to the achievement of goals and objectives in a way that is relatively free of interference. For top performers this 'freedom' is important to keep them committed to an organization. It is an indication that they are trusted to do the job.



4 Visibility. Global assignments are now considered to be important for leadership development and essential for leadership opportunities. Globally talented individuals demand visibility with senior corporate executives as mentors and coaches. They want to know that they are visible at the highest levels of the organization and also that senior executives will act as their champions. Invisibility is no longer an option, globally talented individuals want to always be in sight and in mind. In this way companies offer an attractive proposition to high-performers, recognizing clearly their importance to the development of the global business. This helps retention and enhances performance and learning.



5 Rewards. Top people want top dollar. Talented people, however, also recognize that they need to perform; they need to add-value. Given that talented individuals want to perform, the return on investment (RoI) equation becomes easier to deal with because the value of their success will be of huge importance to the global business. Assignments

not only have a clear business justification, but the assignee has been deeply involved in the construction of the assignment challenge. This creates a win-win situation.



6 Support. Given that all of the above factors have been achieved, what is left is to ensure that the assignee has full organizational support. This includes the support of an effective, sophisticated global organizational development and global human resource management unit, and full support from senior executives in the line of the businesses and throughout its global processes. Support is critical for the success of global assignments.

The role of Global HRM

Working with global business process leaders and corporate leadership, the role of knowledgeable and sophisticated global HRM personnel is critical to the implementation of the big six. Global HRM should be central to the success of the big six, specifically in working with relevant organizational stakeholders and the assignee in ensuring assignment success.

Global assignments continue to be critical to global business success. However, research points to the issues involved in attracting the best talent to global assignments and in retaining those who develop the cosmopolitan global mindsets necessary for leaders of global companies. By thinking through the relationship between the needs of talented assignees (the big six) and the organizational requirements from successful assignments, a process model of global assignment creation and management can be developed within a broader architecture of global talent management. These are important and difficult tasks, but are now strategically front and centre for companies in the contemporary global business environment.



Dr. Steve McKenna is Professor of Human Resource Management in the School of Human Resource Management at York University.

Innovation in leadership development

A lesson from the Roundtable



Our research in leadership training and development over the last four years has led us to examine a large variety of leadership programs. One of the more impressive and novel approaches that we came across was developed by a company called *The Executive Roundtable*.

We think their approach is worth sharing >

Developing future leaders is, understandably, among the most critical concerns for just about any organization. Ironically, while the popularity of leadership development programs continues to rise organizations still struggle to find programs that deliver solid results—the magic bullet, it seems, has yet to be found.

According to the *Conference Board of Canada*, the majority of Canadian organizations regards their leadership development practices as “relatively ineffective” and expresses only “lukewarm support” for them. There are indeed serious questions about whether Canadian organizations have the leadership development systems in place to effectively support their future leadership requirements.

Although it is often assumed that “leadership” is best learned from the top, it appears organizations can acquire unique benefits by having up-and-coming leaders learn from each other.

In our discussions with many companies and consulting firms, we came across an organization that offers a uniquely different and potentially powerful approach to nurturing and developing leadership talent.

Glain Roberts-McCabe, the founder and CEO of the Executive Roundtable, developed *The Roundtable for Leaders* program after she noticed that up-and-coming corporate leaders enjoy expanding their leadership capability through interactions with other leaders of the same level and ambition. In 2010, she launched a 10-month program that featured peer mentoring and today the program is used by an impressive list of corporate clients, including PepsiCo Foods Canada, Royal Bank, Torstar, Maple Leaf Foods and CAA South Central Ontario.

A different approach to leadership development

What makes *The Roundtable for Leaders* program different? A third of Canadian organizations already provide mentoring and coaching programs for their managerial-level employees. However such programs are based on the belief that knowledge is best transferred down from more seasoned, or even soon-to-be-retiring, managers to less experienced employees. In contrast, *The Roundtable for Leaders* has been designed in large part around the concept of having “high potential” managers work in small exclusive groups, led by an executive facilitator, to share and exchange ideas, perspectives and actionable advice.

The program combines peer mentoring with more traditional, one-on-one coaching. Participants meet regularly to discuss key issues and topics relevant to their jobs and stage of career and to provide each other with advice and feedback. The sessions are structured and led by an expert facilitator, who brings additional skills and experiences to the group and to the learning process. The program is offered to large corporate clients, as well as to the public, in which case managers from different organizations gather around the table.

Program participants perceive the value of peer mentoring differently than that of coaching. The coaching process helps establish and clarify short and long-term goals through challenging questions and personal reflections. In contrast, peer mentoring helps generate concrete ideas for dealing with specific work challenges, exposes participants to a different way of thinking, provides a sounding board, as well as an opportunity for vicarious learning.

Participants talk effectiveness

Can leadership skills really be acquired effectively from one’s peers, rather than gleaned from those higher up the corporate ladder? Certainly there is ample research evidence that supports the power of peer-based interactions on leadership development. However, we were curious to speak directly to those individuals who had undergone *The Roundtable for Leaders* program to understand why this approach should work.

We interviewed 30 individuals who completed the program, including Senior Managers, Directors and Vice-Presidents from a diverse range of companies and industries. Based on their accounts, the success of this program seems to stem from its ability to effectively facilitate two types of learning outcomes—work-related and career-related.

“It’s a great opportunity to really make sure that you understand who you are as a leader and as a manager, and how you want to envision your growth”.

Work-related outcomes include an enhanced ability to address strategic and tactical challenges, deal with subordinates, and make better decisions. Participants described the value they obtained from being able to receive critical feedback in a non-threatening and non-competitive context. Numerous participants also reported how much they benefited from the rare opportunity to practice providing coaching advice to others.

We defined the second type of learning outcome as career-related since participants often described how this program elevated their level of career aspiration. This essentially helped them reflect more fully on their career orientation and outlook.

These two types of personal learning appear to be related and mutually reinforcing. As one participant explained: “It’s a great opportunity to really make sure that you understand who you are as a leader and as a manager, and how you want to envision your growth”. Many participants also described how their participation in the program increased their engagement and motivation, as well as self-insight and self-confidence.

What makes it work?

This program, quite effectively, harnesses the power of peer mentoring. In order to do that, the program includes a number of critically important elements. The first element is diversity. Participants in the program generally represent a broad range of functional backgrounds includ-

ing Finance, Marketing, Sales, Operations, HR – thereby contributing a rich variety of expertise and perspectives to group discussions. A common sentiment among participants is the appreciation for being exposed to a diversity of views and experiences, which enhances the capacity to apply different lenses when analyzing their own situations. As one participant, a Vice President of a large advertising firm, told us:

“I like that it brings together people from different roles, and we share problems that we all have. [While] our problems might not be identical, there are similarities in the issues we face, and we explore those issues together. We all tend to have a different approach to how we might solve a problem, and the questions we might ask. It’s very interesting to hear what other might do or might not do. We learn from that. At the end of the day it causes you to be more thoughtful about how you might approach a similar challenge if you were to face it.”

Similarly, a Director at a large media company commented that, “The perspective people brought to the table was great, because someone from HR is going to have a different perspective than someone from Finance or someone from Marketing or Operations. It was great to see that cross section both from different departments as well as from different industries.”

The quality of the facilitator seems to be another ingredient essential to the success of this program. The role of the facilitator is to establish a sense of trust and confidentiality, which in turn facilitates openness and sharing. Without these elements the effectiveness of peer mentoring as a leadership development tool would be greatly diminished. Given that, The Executive Roundtable employs former Senior level executives, who bring their first-hand leadership experiences along with facilitation skills to guide the discussion.

Overall, peer mentoring appears to represent an effective approach to leadership development. Although it is often assumed that “leadership” is best learned from the top, it appears organizations can acquire unique benefits by having up-and-coming leaders learn from each other. Peer mentoring may become a best practice for more and more organizations seeking to expand their repertoire of leadership development initiatives.

Dr. Igor Kotlyar is Assistant Professor of Management in the Faculty of Business and Information Technology at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology.

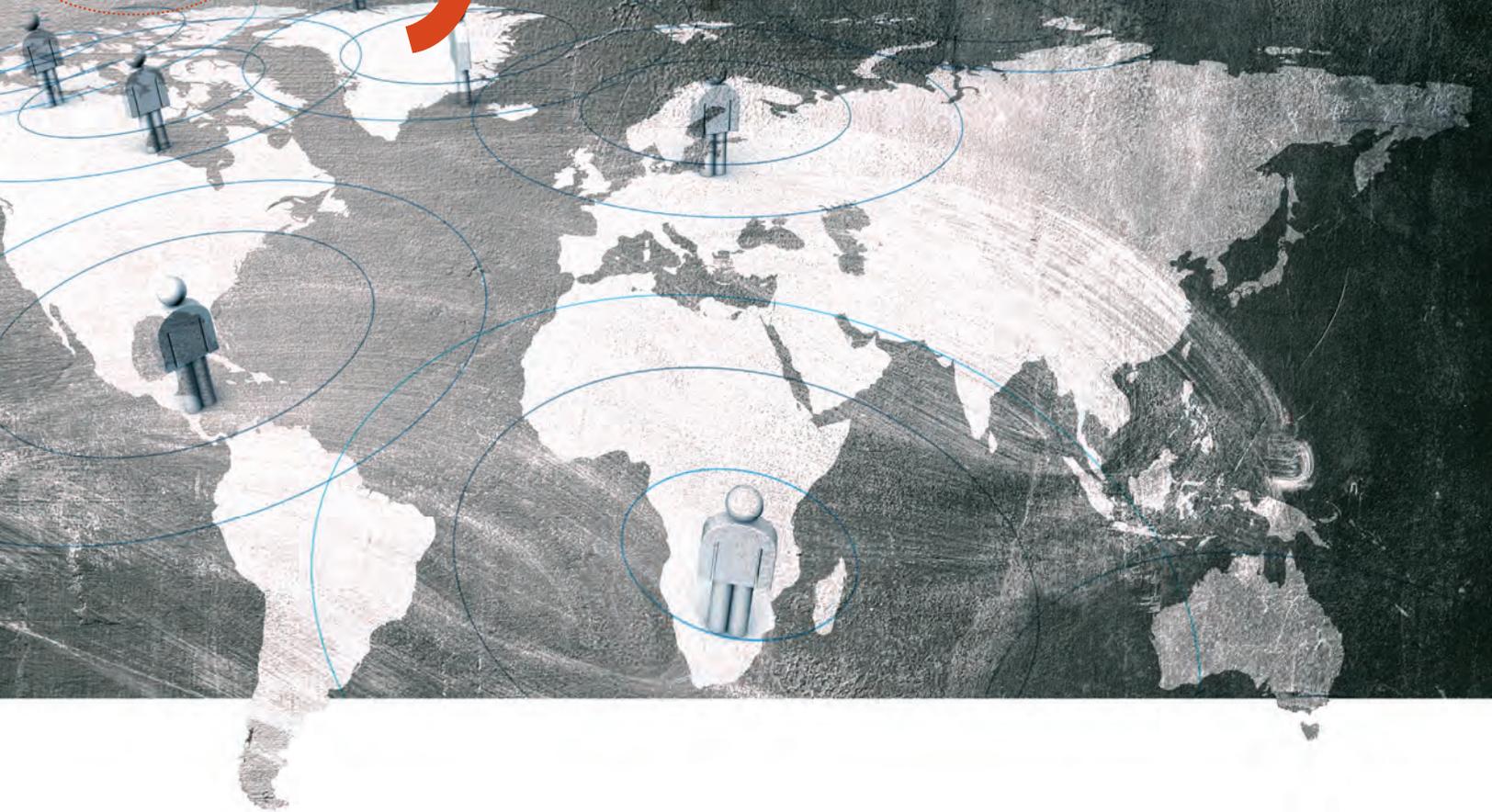


Dr. Len Karakowsky is Professor of Human Resource Management in the School of Human Resource Management at York University.



Glain Roberts-McCabe is the Founder and President of The *Executive Roundtable* (www.theexecutiveroundtable.ca)

When HR is risky business



I have pursued the practice of HR on the global stage for many years now. It has been exciting, challenging and personally rewarding. My HR experience actually began with my first trip outside of Canada, when I chose to work as an expatriate in Afghanistan and lived at Kandahar Airfield (KAF) to support the Canadian military. I have since travelled extensively and consulted on multi-billion dollar projects elsewhere in the Middle East, Europe, Russia, North and South America, and in both desert and arctic climate conditions.

My current company has grown over 20 years from being a small, Canadian based firm of 400 people, into the present day organization, which now employs 11,000 people in over 65 offices across 30 countries, and manages

project sites in remote locations all over the world. Our primary business in the mining, infrastructure and renewable power sectors has given me a great deal of exposure to the complexity of the HR function on a global scale.

I am a labour strategist and I work as part of a team of global site deployment specialists who focus on advanced project planning and risk mitigation strategies. Simply put, we “set up shop”. My team considers all factors required to support engineering design and deployment of a project, such as the mobility, health, safety, security and sustainability of resources and personnel, anywhere in the world.

Consider site deployment as a group of engineers, urban planners and other specialists who need to build a city. Now put that city in the middle of the desert, ocean or arctic. Tack on socio-political, cultural, legislative and

environmental constraints of both your home and host country. Toss in a high risk to personal safety and a large degree of uncertainty, and ask yourself—“How am I going to get to people to work here?”

Where people and power are the two most costly factors associated with the success of a project, the need for well developed labour strategies is essential. Furthermore, the need for a cohesive and cross-trained team, who are willing to travel for long periods of time, and remain open to new experiences in foreign territories, is imperative.

In the typical organization framework, HR drives recruitment, training & development, compensation/benefits, and employee or labour relations. Additionally, HR covers the popular best practices in organization development, change management, talent management, and employee engagement. All of these factors readily apply to the concept of site deployment in addition to a host of others. At the onset of a remote project site, there are no offices or hard-wall residences, only pop-up tents or weather havens. These are often shared sleeping spaces that provide detached locker room style washrooms and showers. The climates are extreme, nutritious food is often lacking, and the work days are extended to weeks without breaks. Employees are separated from family and friends in an isolated region, which often lacks a communication infrastructure. Environmental and political turbulence threatens personal safety and security, through risk associated with weather, wildlife and civil unrest. In addition, most major projects operate within the confines of a negotiated agreement with the host country government to employ their local people. This speaks to the need for economic and social sustainability of the host country, adding a further requirement for HR to consider alignment with community interface and government relations functions. HR in this instance must add cultural integration, religious, language and safety awareness training into the mix.

In the site deployment specialty, the labour strategy considers the organization design and framework for sourcing, training, compensating and mobilizing both expatriate employees (as highly qualified specialists), and the integration of host communities along with other third country nationals (TCNs). We need to take into account the nature of competitive projects, local area demographics and population density, along with host country legislation and compensation benchmarks. All of this information is used to inform decisions relating to sourcing, training and compensation. Sourcing is influenced by the availability of resources and constrained by cost and mobility. Where the workforce is divided between expatriates, locals and other TCNs, highly qualified specialists are often expected to work with and/or train lesser qualified people from the local community. This requirement drives recruitment and training plans, which are designed in consideration of sustainable development over the life span of a project, and following its demobilization.

The politics and legislation of the host country apply to all who work within it, and the host government retains significant influence over business operations. Income taxes must be paid to both the home and host government. This affects the compensation structures of expatriates. In some cases, there is a mandate for expatriates to be compensated in local currency. This requires consideration of dual contracts, currency exchanges and it impacts the employee’s social security benefits. The compensation of the local workforce is influenced by the host country government and political structure, and the rates must be set to consider safety and protection with regard to their own legislative authorities.



Consider site deployment as a group of engineers, urban planners and other specialists who need to build a city. Now put that city in the middle of the desert, ocean or arctic. Tack on socio-political, cultural, legislative and environmental constraints of both your home and host country. Toss in a high risk to personal safety and a large degree of uncertainty, and ask yourself—“How am I going to get to people to work here?”



In certain countries, where government demands are high and the company must negotiate, the government could move to restrict landing permits or deny work permits. This can significantly impact the movement of all resources and consequently affect cost and scheduling of the project.

Organizations must carefully craft government negotiations in an effort to avoid conflict, work stoppage and foreign corruption. The HR professional should play a critical role in all of these facets, with special attention paid to an integrated planning process that aims to promote business integrity and influence, while protecting the human rights and safety of its workforce from global risk.

Danielle Comeau, (MHRM 2012) is Senior Human Resources Analyst at Hatch, Canada.



by Christine Bevilacqua

Seeing the big picture



There will always be a demand for certain technical aspects of the HR role—compensation, benefits, training, labour relations, etc.

However, increasingly HR generalists are called upon to be more well rounded and capable of seeing how each of these “tools” fits with the big picture.

HR practitioners can take one of two routes. They can become highly trained specialists who deal with technical issues like compensation design or they can seek a more generalist HR role. The generalist role is not specifically an HR role, and it certainly requires a more strategic view of the organization. You need to know what the company is trying to achieve, what options are available to them and what role HR can play in contributing to the overall strategy.

My career path has moved from being an HR specialist to an HR generalist to something that is likely a combination of many facets of organizational responsibilities beyond even the HR role. In this regard, I would like to share what I think are useful approaches for those seeking to move into more strategic HR areas.

My advice is pretty straightforward and simple. Get to know your business. Learn about your business and be able to speak intelligently about how each major function operates and how they contribute to the bottom line. Understand the financials and know what levers most impact your industry. There are always a bunch of HR approaches to a situation—you need to know which one is the best fit to help the company achieve their goals.

How do you get to know your business?

If you can, find opportunities to work in operational roles for a while. People who have worked in the field often are seen as “getting it” more than those who just work in HR. Consider working in a few different industries as well. Although much of HR is portable from one industry to the next, the way you apply it is often quite different. You’ll also get a feel for the different “styles” of different industries and figure out what works best for you. I discovered early on that I liked the pace and diversity of service industries, and appreciated that their biggest expense was often their labour costs. Because of this, the impact of HR initiatives could be more easily seen than in some other industries.

You can also learn more about your business by offering your help to others. Sometimes that means I take on more work for a project or sometimes it means moving into entirely different areas of responsibility. At one point I managed an IT department—which was definitely not my area of technical ability! For me, it was probably easier than asking for a promotion or a new role—I often slid slowly into new jobs without having to feel like I needed to self promote. But because of this I learned a lot more about other functional areas of a company and am better able to suggest HR initiatives that make sense to them.

Enjoy the big picture

I enjoy creating order out of chaos—I’ve found I do best in start ups, or where there are significant organizational

challenges. I like to put processes in place, and find ways to improve the effectiveness of the people in an organization. While I have rarely found it easy to convince executives of the benefits of some HR initiatives, I like finding ways to demonstrate how they link to the business and support what they are trying to achieve. I know that I am trusted to do the right thing for the business, to make sure all of the “stuff” that needs to get done in HR happens, to continuously look for ways to do things better and sometimes to tell the CEO stuff no one else wants to say.



Learn about your business and be able to speak intelligently about how each major function operates and how they contribute to the bottom line. Understand the financials and know what levers most impact your industry.



I am fortunate to see the impact of my decisions in very tangible ways as we continue to grow our company in new and exciting ways. I have been with a specialty retailer (Pet Valu) for just over 10 years. My initially HR-focused work seems to have expanded into a number of diverse corporate areas, including franchising, legal, insurance to name a few. Since 2009, when we were acquired by Roark Capital, we’ve added approximately 220 stores to a total of 500+ locations, and are now coast to coast in Canada and in five eastern seaboard states in the U.S. We’ve completely re-branded the organization, opened new, or renovated over 400 stores, launched new on-line learning initiatives for operators, re-energized our franchise recruitment marketing, improved franchisee relationships, and provided pet parents with over 7,000 new and healthy pet food and supply products. Both the company and its partners—the franchisees and Roark Capital are extremely happy with the results of this change.

I think a satisfying career in HR is much like a satisfying career in any field. It’s finding a role where you have an opportunity to contribute, where your skills and abilities are appreciated, where you continue to grow and learn and where you are able to achieve the level of career success you envisioned for yourself. For many of you, this may mean integrating your HR expertise with knowledge of other functional areas in order to generate a bigger picture view of the organization.

Christine Bevilacqua (MHRM 2010) is the Vice President, Human Resources and Corporate Administration at Pet Valu



by Prahba Packiam

In praise of non-linear careers

Admittedly, I had not set out to embark on a career in HR. In fact, my undergraduate education was geared toward pursuing a law degree. However, like many others, by the time I had completed my degree, I was not financially prepared to pursue more time in school. Consequently, I set my sights on the working-world following completion of my BA in Political Science.

I began my career as a Marketing Assistant for Sears Canada. It was a pleasant experience but one that I felt was not for me long-term. For a few years I was content to remain in that position since it was comfortable and certainly helped “pay the bills.” However, I knew that I had to move on (though I had no clear idea where I would be moving on to). After five years with Sears, out of the blue, one day, I simply resigned.

With no net to catch me, I scrambled to re-adjust my career sights. I started “temping” and ended up signed to a three-week contract with Canada Trust (prior to the merger with TD). As with most things in life, the unexpected can often turn into great opportunities. Once I got my “foot in the door”, it opened up a pathway into the HR profession.

The journey begins

To be honest, before my employment with TD, I had no idea there even was a department dedicated to the employee experience. However, once I discovered it, I knew I had found my niche. After a relatively short period of time at



work, I was offered the opportunity to become an HR Coordinator. Shortly thereafter, I was promoted to an HR Special Projects Officer. This was a wonderful learning opportunity since I was able to gain the unique experience of working as a member of the integration team formed after the TD-Canada Trust merger in order to deal with unanticipated front-line HR issues.

After six years with TD-Canada Trust, once again I found myself at a crossroads. I could have easily settled into a relatively secure career with the bank. However, I knew that if I wanted to stay true to myself, then simply feeling “safe” was not for me. As the project team was winding-down, I had the option to stay or take a “package”. I jumped at the chance to try something different.

Without any real foresight or experience, I decided to try my hand at becoming an independent consultant and start my own company. My first contract was with EDS Canada (now part of HP). From that, I learned the art of managing my own company and winning contracts. This was an exciting learning opportunity. However, after a time, I realized that I missed the corporate environment and specifically, I missed interacting with an HR team. This led me to rejoin the corporate world.

Upon re-entering the corporate scene, I worked at an array of top-tier global companies and leading industries from HOK to KPMG, to Rogers Communications, along with a handful of others. With some focus and initiative, my career advanced to where I am now—a Senior HR Business Partner with CGI Group Inc., a global IT services company, headquartered in Montreal, Canada with 69,000 professionals worldwide.

Currently I oversee the Banking, Global Wealth and Capital Markets teams. This includes a portfolio of over 700 professionals with a global scope of work conducted across Canada, India and the US. I work closely with my clients to strategize their business plans in order to integrate essential human resources components.

I’m glad the journey has been gradual, filled with vertical and lateral moves, mixed with both independent consulting and corporate experience in a diverse range of companies and industries. I think my non-linear career path may have some useful lessons for other budding HR professionals.

What I have learned

I am a huge advocate for continuous learning. My advice—indulge in as much on-going education and training as you possibly can. I’ve completed my Masters in HR Management at York University, a CHRP, and most recently I

received my Global HR Professional designation (GPHR) which is rapidly becoming a critical aspect of one’s HR professional profile. Increasingly HR professionals are managing teams across borders and we are being asked to consider all HR issues from a global lens.



There is no greater competitive advantage than to keep current and relevant. Enhancing your knowledge, skills and abilities will keep your perspective fresh and help you bring ideas to a business environment that craves innovation.



I think staying on top of technological trends is paramount for HR professionals given that technological change will continue to impact many professions, including our’s. For example, there is a push for “just in time” HR. The pressure is mounting to provide our services, whether its employment contracts or online learning modules, in real time on mobile devices, to our global audience. In this knowledge-based economy there is no greater competitive advantage than to keep current and relevant. Enhancing your knowledge, skills and abilities will keep your perspective fresh and help you bring ideas to a business environment that craves innovation.

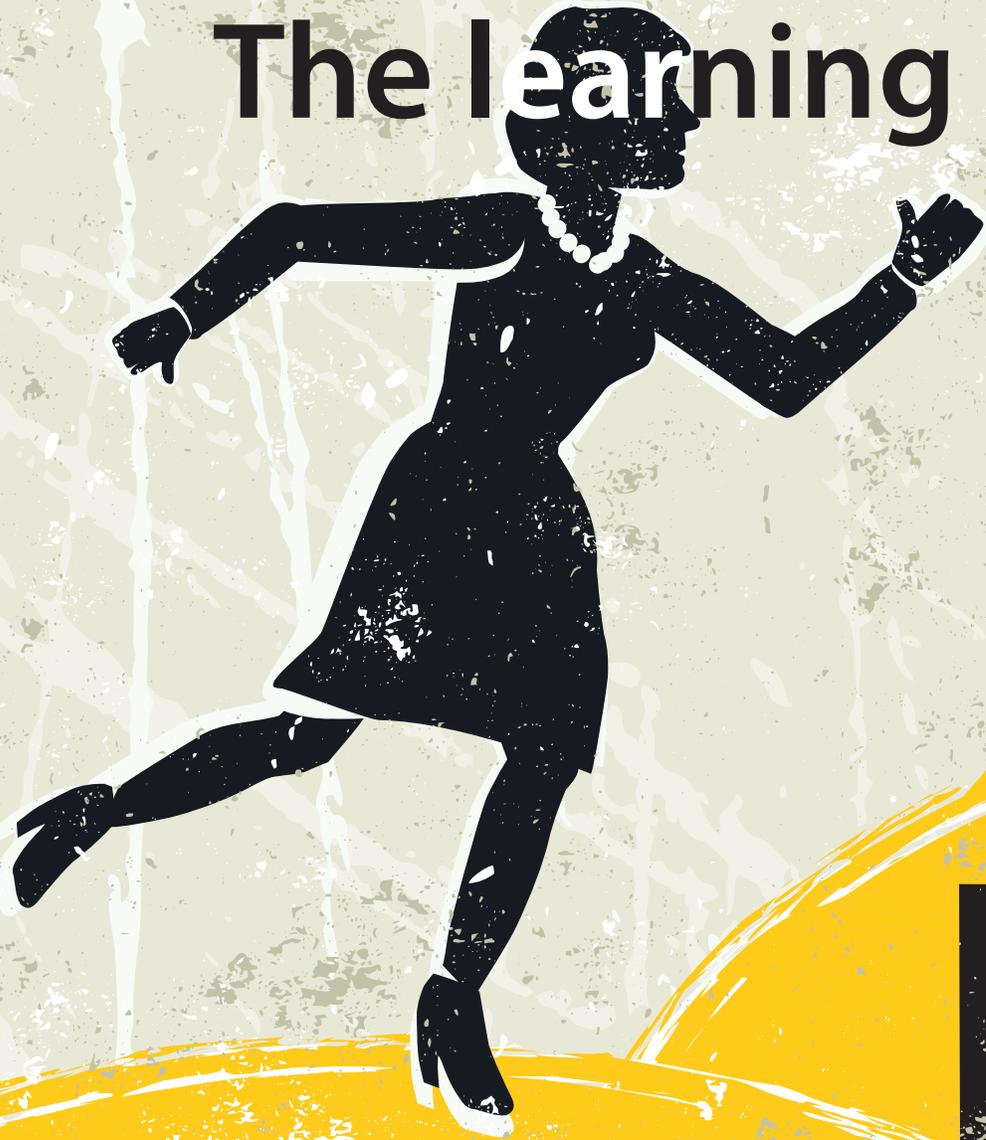
As the Project Officer for the first team of board members of the York MHRM Alumni, I created the Mentorship Program which linked 4th year HR undergraduates with HR professionals working in the field. From my interactions with new HR graduates I have closely witnessed the challenges of breaking into this profession. Regardless of how large the company, HR departments are running lean and the competition for all roles, whether entry level or above, is significant. The advice I offer to new grads is simply get your foot in the door, whatever the company, whatever the starting position. The most important objective for you is to get experience on your CV and from there you will be better able to navigate your professional development.

Prabha Packiam
(MHRM 2008)
is a Senior Human
Resources
Business Partner with
CGI Group Inc.



by Jessica Gabriel

The learning curve



My **leap** from the
classroom to the business world

Looking back on my career to date, I realize that my decision to obtain a Masters degree in human resources management set the stage for my career in HR. I entered the MHRM program after graduating from the University of Western Ontario with a bachelor degree in management and organizational studies. It was apparent to me that I was a bit different from many of the other students in the master's program. I had entered the program immediately after obtaining my undergrad degree. In stark contrast, many of the other students were already established and successful in the HR field. Needless to say, I was a bit intimidated given the sheer caliber of the students in the program. Intimidation aside, the range of seasoned HR professionals in this program offered a truly enriching learning environment. And, I can genuinely say that I learned as much from my professional colleagues at York, as I did from my wonderful professors in the program.

Shortly after I completed my master's degree in HRM in January of 2010, I obtained a contract position as HR Operations Administrator with KPMG. As you likely know, this high profile organization is composed of a global network of professional firms providing audit, tax and advisory services worldwide. I was excited to set foot in the real world of HR and of course I was also interested in the prospect of working in HR for one of the largest accounting and consulting firms in the professional services industry.

I am delighted to say that not only was the role at KPMG my first experience in Human Resources, but it was a critical learning experience. It was the perfect position for me because the role gave me the ability to support three different HR Teams- the HR Services Team, the Mobility Team and the Employee Relations team. Talk about exposure to a wealth of HR functions! I was able to learn the principles of employee relations, the ways in which the organization supports global assignments for their people and I was also introduced to a variety of HR policies, employee benefits and programs. Obtaining such a rich exposure under various teams during my 6 month contract allowed me to hone in on what direction I wanted to take next. And because KPMG was supportive of my career development, I was eager to see what role and challenges I could take on next.

Following my work as an HR Operations Administrator, I expressed interest in employee relations work. I was soon offered a role on the Employee Relations Team as an Employee Relations Advisor. I was about to jump on to another new and exciting learning curve. In my capacity as an Employee Relations Advisor, I was able to develop the skills necessary to advise senior leaders and partners in the firm on employee relations issues. A large part of my role included partnering with these leaders to provide risk mitigation, guidance, evidence-based advice and strategic coaching regarding employment law as well as the interpretation and application of company policies and processes. In addition, I provided recommendations and guidance to senior leaders on managing dismissals, performance management, progressive discipline, leave management and workplace investigations.

I have found that what you learn on the job entails much more than simply comprehending the mechanics, the rules and principals of HR policy and procedures. HR professionals are not simply technicians –experts in their realm of knowledge. Performing the HR role successfully is a multi-faceted responsibility. HR professionals are also researchers and analysts. They need to uncover where challenges exist. They need to determine how to research a problem and assess potential solutions. Equally important, HR professionals must learn how to develop productive professional relationships with those who require their assistance and guidance. I try to nurture strong lines of communication with managers and senior leaders of my organization. Through this I have managed to gain a clear understanding of the business challenges facing our organization and how HR can contribute to keeping our organization ahead of the game.

I have found that what you learn on the job entails much more than simply comprehending the mechanics, the rules and principals of HR policy and procedures. HR professionals are not simply technicians –experts in their realm of knowledge. Performing the HR role successfully is a multi-faceted responsibility.

After being in my contract position for about 9 months, it was not long before I was offered a permanent full time position as an Employee Relations Advisor around June of 2011. The following year, I was promoted to my current role of Senior Employee Relations Advisor where more learning opportunities came my way almost immediately. Shortly after this promotion, I was assigned to manage a large scale strategic restructuring initiative within the firm. This was another great adventure! I was able to learn how to appropriately advise the senior leaders involved on how to successfully drive results while mitigating any risks arising amidst the restructuring. Given KPMG's growth strategy I was also able to advise senior leaders on employee relations issues for a series of acquisitions.

As I am relatively new to this position, I am admittedly still on the "learning curve". But I have come to realize that that is actually a great place to be. I am excited to grow and develop in this rewarding role. Essentially, that is what I love about this profession—the availability of options to develop expertise in a wide range of areas. Once you become expert in one area there is always room to learn more.

Jessica Gabriel (MHRM 2010) is Senior Employee Relations Advisor at KPMG.



Q & A with Dr. Julia Richardson

In her book, *The Independent Expatriate* (VDM Verlag), Julia Richardson offers rich and detailed insights into the experience of working and living abroad.



Dr. Julia Richardson is Associate Professor of Human Resource Management in the School of Human Resource Management at York University

HR Edge: *What was your aim in researching this topic and in writing this book?*

JR: I wanted to provide some insight into the professional and personal implications of making the move to work overseas. Specifically, my interest was to examine the impact of such a move on career advancement, professional learning and family relationships.

HR Edge: *How do you define an international career? Does it always mean working overseas?*

JR: An increasing number of people are choosing to pursue an 'international career' be it in the form of an expatriate assignment, immigration or what has recently been called 'self-initiated expatriation' where someone seeks out a temporary overseas position independently of an employer. Of course, international careers aren't confined to these three categories—some people's careers might involve occasional international travel in the form of short term business trips whereas others might well remain at home but work with clients and colleagues in other countries such that much of their daily activity has a strong international flavour to it. Put another way, you don't have to travel to have an international career!

HR Edge: *Who were the self-initiated expatriates in your study?*

JR: In my case those individuals happened to be a group of university professors who have left their home country independent of an employer to take up a position in a university in one of four countries: New Zealand, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates and Singapore. So, they aren't on a sabbatical with the expectation of returning to a principal

employer but have literally left one university in one country to work in a university in another country albeit with the expectation of returning home (or going elsewhere). So they aren't immigrants either.

HR Edge: *In your research with this group of expatriates, did you find any consistent reasons behind the decision to leave one's home country and seek out a position elsewhere?*

JR: Responses to that question were varied. However it seems that a key theme permeating all of the interviews was what many described as a 'search for adventure', where interviewees described wanting to 'see more of the world', 'learn something new' or simply 'experience a new culture'. Other reasons were also mentioned such as wanting to provide their children with an opportunity to live in a different country (all parents mentioned this as a motivator) and professional/career development opportunities (surprisingly only a few mentioned this as a motivator despite the fact that later on they said that it had impacted positively on their professional lives). Perhaps not surprisingly, money was only a driver for those moving to the United Arab Emirates.

HR Edge: *What was it like to be a self-initiated expatriate and what were the implications for them with regard to their families?*

JR: In my research, I found that a key theme here was the challenges and rewards for family relationships. Interviewees spoke of having to work 'as a family' to maintain positive relationships both with each other and to form new friendships with other expatriates and locals. As might be expected they also spoke a lot about cross-cultural adjustment and the different kinds of challenges they



faced, depending on the host country. Yet, unexpectedly, they all spoke about expatriation involving not only learning how to live in a particular host country but also learning to live outside of their home country, away from family and friends. For many, this was in some respects more challenging than learning to live in the host country—particularly those who had left behind elderly relatives, long term personal and professional relationships.

HR Edge: *How did these expatriates evaluate their experiences? What was most challenging and/or most rewarding?*

JR: All interviewees said that they had benefited from the experience both professionally and personally. Interestingly, while only a minority had said that they had initially expatriated for professional reasons, e.g. a higher level job, looking to add to their professional skills and experience etc they all said that expatriation had ultimately had a positive impact on their career advancement. A particularly dominant theme was how expatriation had provided a broad range of learning opportunities, not just in terms of learning about new cultures but also in terms of learning about themselves, their ability to adjust to living away from ‘home’ and developing connections with other internationally mobile professionals (not just professors). Indeed, their recently acquired international networks had oftentimes provided further career opportunities in other parts of the world.

HR Edge: *It sounds idyllic. Were there any down-sides for these individuals?*

JR: It wasn’t all ‘good times and smiles,’ as one interviewee described it. Some of the interviewees talked about regrets, wishing that they had done things differently in order to maximize the learning and ‘enjoyment’ of the experience such as wishing that they had travelled more in the region, built closer relationships with locals instead of restricting themselves to forming friendships with other expatriates and, specifically, to other expatriates from their own countries. Another ‘regret’ expressed by many interviewees was not having ‘done their homework’ prior to arriving in the host country. Indeed several spoke about arriving knowing very little about either the country or the institution in which they expected to spend the next few years. Most of the interviewees said that if they

had only taken the time to find out more about their host country and organization they might have profited more from the experience in terms of being able to ‘adjust’ more quickly in the short term but also in terms of extending their professional advancement.

HR Edge: *Given your research findings, what should organizations understand with regard to expatriates?*

JR: It seems that knowledge of the prospective environment is crucial to the success of an expatriate’s transition to their new home. There is a growing body of literature signaling the need for hiring managers to ensure that new recruits are provided with sufficient information so that they are clearly aware of what to expect after relocation—i.e. both professionally and personally. My study underscores the need for managers to take the initiative in providing this information because often times relocating employees may not know what to ask for—particularly if this is their first international move.

HR Edge: *What message do you think readers of the book will glean from your research on the expatriate experience?*

JR: In terms of the book’s overall key message—perhaps it is better to leave that to two of the people who took part in the study:

I went with an open mind, I wanted a new challenge. I wanted to get out of the UK basically to explore. I mean those were my criteria and I achieved them. It was hard work but it was what I wanted... so in that respect it was a total success!

– a female expatriate who had moved from the UK to the United Arab Emirates

The learning gives me a big kick, you know, a big buzz. I feel as though I am doing something worthwhile here, something important that is on-going. I am here in Asia learning more about a different way of life, as well as living it.

– a male expatriate who had moved from the UK to Singapore with his wife and three children

Graduate Program



Dr. Mary Jo Ducharme is the Graduate Program Director, School of Human Resource Management at York University

Since the launch of our masters program in 2004, the reputation of this program has grown rapidly. We continue to attract a wide range of seasoned HR leaders and professionals.

Our students possess diverse work experience from all over the globe. With an increase in the number of applicants, our MHRM program is developing a global presence and is quickly becoming the school of choice for graduate HR education.

Now that our MHRM program has been thriving for over a decade, we have an active alumni group. The School of Human Resource Management is working with the MHRM

Alumni Executive to develop a series of speaker/social events that will bring together current students, faculty and MHRM alumni. We look forward to welcoming back many of our alumni at a social gathering during our Fall Orientation of new students.

Our PhD program in Human Resource Management marks its fifth anniversary by graduating our first cohort of PhD students. Their accomplishments are commendable and it is not surprising that they are graduating with tenure stream job offers from prestigious universities. Our current class of PhD students are all very active on the conference circuit and have published prodigiously in excellent journals.



Undergraduate Program



Dr. Chris Chan is the Undergraduate Program Director, School of Human Resource Management at York University

The School of Human Resource Management runs one of the largest programs in human resource management in North America. In addition to our Bachelor of Human Resource Management (3-year Ordinary and 4-year Honors) degrees, we offer a Certificate of Human Resource Management.

Our faculty bring a wealth of scholarly and applied HR experience to the classroom. Students gain exposure to the various functions of HR through the plethora of courses that we offer. These courses also help prepare students for the Certified Human Resource Professional exam and certification.

Recently, the School had the pleasure of celebrating the successes of our three finest

human resource management students through various scholarship awards. **Mr. Akiva Stern** won the Human Resource Management Professionals of West Toronto Scholarship of Excellence award, which recognized academic excellence for full-time students in the program who earned at least 84 credits and were entering into their fourth year of studies. Mr. Stern is now completing his Masters in Industrial Relations at the University of Toronto. **Mr. Thomas Yeghouchian** won the KWA Partners Scholarship, awarded to students who completed 90 credits and earned the highest grade point average. Finally, **Ms. Hina binte Maheri** won the School of Human Resource Management Scholarship for students who completed at least 87 credits and who had the best overall cumulative grade point average.

A message from Jacqueline Tran, President of the York Human Resources Student Association



It was my great honour to assume the role of President of the Human Resources Student Association for the 2012-2013 academic school year.

Throughout this past year, we have been able to work together to successfully host thirteen events, two sponsorship

initiatives, and multiple tabling sessions that doubled our general membership list. We also branched out to work with the York Debating Society to host an interactive Public Speaking Workshop.

Among some of the other events we organized are the Chocolate Mixer, Career Management Seminar, HRP Information Session, Resume

Workshop, and ADP's Insider Edition. The most notable event held was our inaugural HRIS Seminar, in collaboration with the School of Human Resource Management and the Office of the Master of New College. This all-day event brought out seven accomplished speakers from four companies, faculty members, and a room full of students from three universities. We are pleased to say that we received a lot of positive feedback for this seminar and students have told us that they feel more equipped going into the workplace after attending it.

We want to take this time to thank everyone who contributed their time to assist us. I invite you to join this wonderful team!

Sincerely,

Jacqueline Tran

Advice from the field

Tapping into 20 years of HR experience



Fiona Gardner (MHRM 2008) is Director, HR Strategy & Development at OPTrust

Fiona Gardner has over 20 years of experience in industries ranging from health care to telecommunications to her current work in the financial services industry. With an outstanding academic record of achievements and an equally impressive list of HR leadership roles, Fiona graciously agreed to offer some insights and advice on a successful career in HR.

HR Edge: *First, tell us about your current work and industry?*

Fiona: I am really excited about my current role as Director, HR Strategy & Development at OPTrust. OPTrust invests and administers pension benefits for members and retirees of OPSEU-represented employees of the Ontario government, LCBO and other boards, agencies and commissions. What's really interesting about OPTrust is that it is a private organization that is not-for-profit. Any profit we make is reinvested back into the pension plan to pay for pension benefits. The DB (defined benefit) pension industry is fascinating, and it has come under some pressure in recent years as people question the sustainability of the DB model. But we've had great success at OPTrust. We just released our results in which we well exceeded our targeted return, and our plan is fully funded. So, we know we have a great future ahead of us.

And my role is part of that. I was hired in 2012 to increase organizational effectiveness in key strategic areas such as succession planning, leadership development, as well as culture and engagement.

HR EDGE: *What role does education play in an HR career?*

Fiona: Obtaining education in HR and achieving the CHRP designation are essentially your ticket to admission in HR these days. Without those two things, most organizations won't consider your application. One of the reasons that I chose to do the MHRM was that I believed that having a graduate degree in HR would give me a competitive advantage in the job market, and that has proven true. The MHRM has also refreshed my HR education and that has been highly beneficial. Knowing the latest research and trends has influenced my decision-making and shaped my work in HR strategy and program design.

HR EDGE: *How "well rounded" should HR professionals be?*

Fiona: I think one of the most helpful experiences in my career, and one which I would recommend to future graduates, is to not be afraid to take on non-HR roles. Working in the operations side enabled me to develop more broadly than had I only remained in HR. For example, when I worked in the manufacturing sector, there was a vacancy in the Finance department and I was offered the opportunity to manage the Finance and Real Estate teams in addition to the HR team. I would be called on to discuss the audit results with the Company Controller or to discuss whether to sell a property in western Canada with the President of Retail Operations. It really taught me a lot about how business decisions are made and I interacted with people who were not part of my everyday circle as an HR Director. It was a remarkable opportunity which developed my skills as a leader while broadening others' perceptions of me too.

Overall, you will need to bring some key skills to the table no matter what role you're in—whether it's in HR or another role in the organization. First and foremost, you must understand the value of managing relationships. Nothing is achieved in isolation. You need to be out there with your customers, learning their business, and building relationships with them. That will be tremendously helpful to you when you roll out that great HR program as people will have gotten to know you and you will have learned about their unique working environment and be better able to provide HR solutions that make sense for the business.

Second, you need to know how the business works. How does your organization make money? What are the corporate initiatives for the year and what is the long-term strategy? Don't be afraid to ask questions about the business. You'll probably find that few people think to explain it to you but if you ask questions, people will be only too happy to explain to you what it is that they do and how it fits into the overall business model. When you understand where the business is and where it is headed, you're better able to devise HR solutions to support the business strategy.

Working in various industries has been wonderful for me in terms of building my knowledge and skills in ways that wouldn't have necessarily happened had I remained with one organization for most of my career. You acquire skills such as relationship building, customer service, flexibility and adaptability—skills that you wouldn't ordinarily learn when you are surrounded by people that have worked with you and have known you for a long time, and with whom you already have established your credibility. When you enter a new organization, the onus is on you to establish and build strong working relationships with your customers and peers.

HR EDGE: *How does the future look for HR professionals?*

Fiona: HR positions still remain in strong demand, despite the recent economic downturn, so that's good news for future graduates of the program. Although we did see a decrease in positions at the senior level, those roles are reappearing as organizations realize the value that senior HR leadership brings.

There is tremendous opportunity to grow and learn in the HR profession. You can choose to be a specialist or a generalist. You can select roles which are more heavily focused on strategy or functional expertise (such as recruitment or compensation) or roles which have higher involvement on the people side such as a business partner or labour relations role. Of course, increasingly HR professionals are being used for higher level strategic purposes. HR practitioners have a unique opportunity to influence the business in strategic ways. When you consider the areas in which HR either drives or participates in the discussion—such as succession planning or culture—HR can make an impact at the highest levels. And HR is one of the few professions that is enterprise-wide. It touches all business units and that creates opportunities for interesting and new challenges.



“First and foremost, you must understand the value of managing relationships. Nothing is achieved in isolation. You need to be out there with your customers, learning their business, and building relationships with them.”



It used to be fairly common for HR practitioners to have clients on a national scale. Increasingly though, we see that HR is “going global”. I've worked with employees in the U.S., the U.K., and across Europe. This is a trend that is no longer restricted to the big multinationals or the software industry but smaller firms are growing outside of their borders too. With the shift toward globalization, HR practitioners will need to be savvy about employment trends and restrictions, cultural norms, global sourcing and compensation. And HR will need to be front and centre assisting with the transition to a global scale and ensuring that the organization is capable of meeting those new challenges. And that's what makes HR such a great profession.

Career building and continuous learning



Amy Robertson (MHRM 2012) is HR Supervisor for The Children's Aid Society of Ottawa

Through the years I have spent in this wonderful field called human resources, I have found there is an extremely close connection between your drive to learn and your capacity to grow your career. I hope by sharing a bit about my career path, you will see how learning and career growth really do go hand in hand in our field.

In 2008, after completing my undergraduate business degree in Waterloo, Ontario, I packed up and moved to Ottawa. I walked into a staffing agency and that same day was offered a short term opportunity working as an HR Administrative Assistant for The Children's Aid Society of Ottawa (CASOTT), and so my journey in HR began!

All of this within two short years. I was like a sponge, absorbing everything about HR, searching for opportunities to take my career to the next level.

Mentoring and on-the-job learning

Look for every opportunity to job shadow or be mentored by a senior employee. As a young professional, I've found mentoring to be so valuable in developing my professional skills, as well as my confidence to take on a supervisory role. Establishing your credibility with the leaders of the organization will allow you to gain involvement in organizational initiatives and "high profile" projects and expedite your learning.

It's also about building credibility. Even at the entry level, if you can build a relationship with the managers, departments, or units you support, you will be exposed to more assignments, projects and opportunities to grow your career. The reason I was prepared to move into a leadership role as quickly as I was, is largely as a result of the mentorship I received from the HR Director at CASOTT.

There's usually more than one right answer or direction when it comes to HR. Every situation is different and you really can't learn it all from a textbook. The real life experiences and guidance that were shared with me through my mentoring relationship deepened my insight into both the profession and the organization, and gave me the confidence to succeed at the next level.

Diversity of experience and continuous learning

No two days working in HR are ever the same, which is exactly what I love about it! Individuals who can demonstrate their ability to manage change and sustain organizational transformation will have infinite opportunities in this field. These are essential skills and abilities required in any organization, big or small.

While the HR profession is very diverse, like other professions, certain characteristics are often crucial to success regardless of your role in HR. The key in building your career is to develop and refine those characteristics. The ability to gather, analyze, and interpret data quickly are crucial to all aspects of HR. Whether you're a HR systems analyst tracking metrics or a labour relations expert conducting an investigation, the ability to think analytically is a common requirement in HR. Strong interpersonal and communication skills are also common across successful HR professionals. Having the ability to build partnerships and influence others is what drives the majority of HR initiatives to succeed.

Given how strategic this profession has become over the years, organizations are searching for experienced HR leaders and will be looking for proven past results, credentials, and certifications to determine their selection. In a world where professions are becoming more and more regulated, there has been a shift towards a desire for candidates with more than an undergraduate degree.

Staying apprised of changes to things like legislation, professional regulations, and hiring trends, is what allows you to be strategic in anticipating the needs of your organization and providing solutions. Connected with this is the need to continue to grow in your capacity for learning. Upgrading your education can also build the credentials you may need to continue to rise within the organization. For me, completing my Masters degree in Human Resource Management at York University was a step in that direction.

When I started the MHRM program in the fall of 2010, I moved to Toronto and explored a whole new side of HR, working for Deloitte as the Recruitment Management System Specialist with their Talent Systems and Reporting team. Going from an advisory role with a non-profit organization to a technical role within a professional services firm was like entering a completely different world. While systems and reporting may not be the "sexiest" side of HR, this role developed my understanding of the importance of reporting metrics and how they support the function in becoming more strategic.

Upon completing my MHRM in 2012, I returned to the Children's Aid Society of Ottawa as a Labour Relations Advisor, embarking on yet another new learning curve. After only five months in the LR role I moved into my current role as HR Supervisor, adding a Management component to my portfolio along with new successes, struggles, and experiences.



Individuals who can demonstrate their ability to manage change and sustain organizational transformation will have infinite opportunities in this field. These are essential skills and abilities required in any organization, big or small.



My desire for continuous learning and my need for a challenge have definitely been factors in my career growth. Continuing my education both formally through programs such as the MHRM, and informally through my own research and training opportunities is what keeps me interested in my field and prevents me from falling into a state of inertia. I started out as an HR administrator doing a bit of everything before moving into specialties such as staffing, HR systems, and labour relations and having that diverse experience is what prepared me for my current role as HR Supervisor. I always focus on what I can learn from each situation. Whether it is an organizational change that could have gone better, a difficult conversation with a staff or co-worker, or a bad hire, I've found that there's always something I can take away from each situation to improve my future performance.

The School of HRM, York University welcomes new professors



Dr. Jing Wang is Assistant Professor of Human Resource Management at York University

Dr. Jing Wang received her Ph.D. in Industrial Relations and Human Resources from the University of Toronto, her Master's degree in Human Resources and Industrial Relations from Cornell University, and her Bachelor's degree in Literature and Law from Peking University.

Jing's research interests include strategic human resources management, work-life balance, under-employment, and abusive leadership. She has also written about labour issues such as minimum wage and labour arbitration in China. Her work has received the *Academy of Management Best Paper Award* and the *Labor and Employment Relations Association Best Paper Award*. She was the recipient of the *Emerald Literati Network Awards for the Outstanding Paper in 2013*. Jing's research has been published in journals such as *Human Resource Management, International Journal of Human Resource Management, International Journal of Manpower, Contemporary Economic Policy, Canadian Labour & Employment Law Journal, and Journal of Creativity & Innovation*.

Jing taught Organizational Behavior and Industrial Relations when she was a PhD candidate at the University of Toronto. After receiving her PhD, she became a faculty member of the Sobey School of Business at Saint Mary's University where she taught Wage and Salary Administration and Human Resources Management. She is currently teaching Human Resources Management and Compensation here in the School of Human Resource Management.

In addition to her impressive academic achievements, Jing brings to our school a wealth of international business experience. Prior to entering academia she worked as a human resource manager and supervisor for several multinational companies in China. Jing's international background and work experience truly enrich the learning environment of her students by integrating global, real world knowledge with a scholarly perspective.



Dr. Amanda Shantz is Assistant Professor of Human Resource Management at York University

Dr. Amanda Shantz completed her Ph.D. in Human Resource Management at the Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resource Management at the University of Toronto. Her dissertation "A field experiment in the effect of non-conscious goals on employee performance" explored the individual and combined effects of conscious and non-conscious goals on performance. Her dissertation work was published in *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Making Processes and Human Resource Management*.

Amanda's research interests include the performance implications of a strategic HRM function and employee engagement. Recent studies include a field experiment on the effect of a novel transfer of training technique, entitled 'written self-guidance' published in *Human Resource Management*, and the role of employee engagement in generating high levels of performance and inhibiting employee absenteeism (see her recent publications in the *International Journal of Human Resource Management, Human Resource Management, and Human Resource Management Journal*). She is currently carrying out work on engagement in the voluntary sector, and is studying issues related to over-qualification.

In the past 5 years, Amanda has worked with over 10 private, public, and non-profit sector organizations in developing, administering and reporting employee engagement surveys that suit the needs of organizations. She partners with organizations to provide this service *gratis*, and then uses the data to inform her research on strategic HRM and employee engagement. If you are interested in learning more, e-mail her at shantza@yorku.ca.

Amanda comes to York with a wealth of teaching experience from the University of Toronto and Kingston University in the United Kingdom. She currently teaches strategic human resource management at the MA level, and human resource management and research methods at the undergraduate level.



Dr. Christa Wilkin is Assistant Professor of Human Resource Management at York University

Dr. Christa Wilkin completed her Ph.D. in Organizational Behaviour and Human Resource at McMaster University. Christa's research interests include individual and team factors that influence work behavior and the nature of non-standard employment relationships. Her work has examined the impact of emotions, personality, and organizational justice on performance. Dr. Wilkin's research on non-standard work arrangements includes issues surrounding contingent workers and volunteers. Her research has been published in the *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, and *Health Promotion International*.

Dr. Wilkin has contributed chapters to several books including *Management and Organization of Temporary Agency Work* (Routledge), *The Role of Emotion and Emotion Regulation in Job Stress and Wellbeing* (Emerald), *Increasing Student Engagement and Retention using Classroom Technologies: Classroom Response Systems and Mediated Discourse Technologies* (Emerald), and *Underemployment: Psychological, Economic, and Social Challenges* (Springer).

Christa comes to York with teaching experience from McMaster University and California State University in Los Angeles. She currently teaches the introduction course to human resource management at the undergraduate level.

In addition to her academic credentials, Dr. Wilkin brings with her, a rich spectrum of HR work. Her diverse professional experiences range from human resources work as a volunteer in Botswana, Africa; HR roles in non-profit organizations; managerial roles in the health care industry; and HR work in the food services industry. Christa obtained her Certified Human Resources Professional (CHRP) designation in 2008.



Dr. Paul Fairlie is Lecturer of Human Resource Management at York University

Dr. Paul Fairlie completed his Ph.D. in psychology at York University, where his initial focus on social and personality psychology shifted to industrial-organizational psychology. His dissertation investigated the role of trait perfectionism in work adjustment.

Paul's main interest is the study of meaningful work, which he has linked to several critically important consequences for employees, including work engagement and burnout. He has written a number of chapters on this subject for several books including *The fulfilling workplace: The organization's role in achieving individual and organizational health* (Gower, 2013) and *Aging, work, and society* (Sage, in press). He is currently working on the development of the Meaningful Work Inventory[®], a comprehensive survey of work characteristics that is evidence-based. Paul's research has also addressed a variety of other topics including impression management, cross-cultural differences, and trait anxiety. His work has appeared in such publications as the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, and *Advances in Developing Human Resources*.

Dr. Fairlie teaches human resource management and training and development for the School of Human Resource Management. He brings an applied focus to his teaching based on 20 years of experience in research and consulting with a variety of well known management consulting firms, including his own company. He is a former Director of Research at Shepell-fgi (now Morneau Shepell), where he oversaw employee health research on thousands of organizations. As an applied researcher and consultant, Paul specializes in individual and organizational assessment (e.g., employee surveys, 360-degree feedback, structured interviews, assessment centres), organizational research, and data analysis.

Publications, conferences, honours & awards

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Congratulations

Professor **Ken McBey** was awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal by the Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor-General of Canada, for outstanding volunteer service to Canada, October 11, 2012.

Laura Colabufo
Administrative Assistant, School of Human Resource Management



Laura has worked at York in a number of roles over the past 26 years prior to assuming her current position as the Administrative Assistant for the School of HRM. Laura has enjoyed her various work experiences at York in a range of different academic departments, while being able to maintain the familiarity of the constant organizational environment.

A significant part of Laura's job is to ensure the School operates smoothly and efficiently within the policies and procedures of the Faculty and University. She supports the Director of the School in administrative matters such as the budget, student concerns and committee work. Despite the inevitable challenges associated with such a challenging job, Laura takes satisfaction in the assistance she is able to provide to students, staff and faculty on an ongoing basis.

Sally George
Undergraduate Program Assistant, School of HRM



Sally has worked as the Undergraduate Program Assistant in the School of HRM since its inception in July 2009. Sally has lived in Canada for just over 10 years, and for most of that time she has worked for York University.

Her main role with the School of HRM is assisting students in the BHRM degree through advising on issues such as program requirements, course selection, exemptions, transfer credits, academic standing, GPA, and gradua-

tion issues. Sally works closely with the Undergraduate Program Director (UPD) to discuss student issues, and help resolve them. Among other duties, she also manages admissions and graduations for our concurrent HRM certificate.

Sally finds her work roles very rewarding as she enjoys working with students, and she finds it especially satisfying to know that she has contributed towards improving their experience while at York!

Debbie Jamieson
Graduate Program Assistant, Graduate Program in HRM



Debbie Jamieson has worked at York for 39 years, most of which has been spent on the administrative side of the university. As a result, she welcomed the move to academic programming in 2004 when she commenced her role of managing the Graduate programs in HRM since their inception. Debbie greatly enjoys getting to know each and every HRM graduate student and helping them out in any way she can during the course of their academic studies.

Debbie continues to be a major contributor towards the success of the Graduate Programs in HRM (MHRM and PhD). Her hard work and dedication have been lauded by students, fellow staff, and faculty alike. Her work as long-time YUSA representative on the York Board of Governors' has been instrumental to improving working conditions for all staff across York University.

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