Chapter 8

Global Issues in Human Resource Management and Their Significance to Information Organizations and Information Professionals

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines global challenges identified in contemporary human resource management literature, and discusses selected challenges as they relate to information organizations and information professionals. The challenges include skills shortages, talent management, shifting demographics, work/life balance, and managing intergenerational and intercultural work groups. Approaches to these challenges are discussed as reported in the literature of human resource management, library management, and information technology, as well as those suggested by the author. The chapter may be of interest to employers, managers and supervisors of information professionals; emerging, entry-level and senior information professionals at all career levels and in all types of information organizations; human resource managers in all types of information organizations.

INTRODUCTION

As a discipline, human resource management (HRM) has a lot to offer, both in theory and practice, to information professionals and the organizations they support. Although major thought in HRM is developed largely in and for corporate settings, the principles and practices have import for non-corporate organizations such as public libraries, academic libraries, libraries within government agencies, and many special libraries of all types. Examining information organizations from an external HRM perspective affords the evaluation of trends and issues and to identify the themes most relevant to information professionals, their workplaces and their larger organizations. This chapter discusses global challenges identified within the HRM literature as they relate to information organizations.

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Critical Issues in Human Resource Management

In alternate years, the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) reports global trends based on forecasts developed by 13 expert panels, each of which reports its consensus on one aspect of HRM. The most recent report, the *Workplace Trends List for 2007-2008* (2007) emphasized the following key themes: globalization and immigration, demographic change and its impact on diversity and labor availability, increasing health care costs, skills shortages and increased emphasis on talent management, the influence of new technologies (especially social networking), and a greater reliance on metrics to assess human capital and the effectiveness of human resource departments. SHRM also surveys its membership directly, identifies and ranks critical issues, and publishes a related report, the most recent of which is the *SHRM Workplace Forecast for 2008-2009* (2008). In contrast to the SHRM *Trends List*, economic issues received greater attention, and were highly ranked as issues, certainly reflecting the global economic downturn of 2008. The ten *Forecast* challenges in order of importance were:

- Continuing high cost of health care in United States
- Large numbers of baby boomers (1945-1964) retiring at around the same time
- Threat of increased health care/medical costs on the economic competitiveness of the United States
- Aging population
- Growing need to develop retention strategies for current and future workforce
- Federal health care legislation

- Preparing organizations for an older workforce and the next wave of retirement
- Threat of recession in United States or globally
- Labor shortages at all skill levels
- Demographic shifts leading to a shortage of high-skilled workers (p. 6)

Yet a third report, *Creating People Advantage* released by the Boston Consulting Group and the World Federation of Personnel Management Associations (2008), echoes similar themes, noting:

In the near future, companies will face eight particularly critical HRM challenges that fall into three strategic categories:

- *Developing and Retaining the Best Employees*. The first category consists of the challenges of managing talent, improving leadership development, and managing work/life balance.
- *Anticipating Change*. The second category encompasses managing demographics, managing change and cultural transformation, and managing globalization.
- *Enabling the Organization*. The third category consists of becoming a learning organization and transforming HRM into a strategic partner." (p. 4)

HRM Trends of Greatest Concern in Information Organizations

Most libraries or information centers are located within larger organizational or institutional structures and are not in control of their own salary and benefit programs, e.g., contracting for health insurance and retirement programs, determining furlough or general pay reduction schemes, establishing cost-of-living and performance pay increases. However, the library is still expected to change along with the parent organization and respond effectively to whatever HRM policies are

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