

# HR professionals lead the charge to unravel human capital evolution

Profession adapts to the technological and societal changes in the business environment while keeping an eye on the bottom line

BY MICHAEL BERNARD

SPECIAL TO THE SUN

The human resources world isn't generally seen as a hot bed of high-tech. But the ease of access to a wealth of data and the entrance of a tech-savvy breed of HR professionals may be changing all that.

Demographic shifts and legislative changes in the management of human and leadership capital are also accelerating changes in a profession that senior executives are relying on more and more to guide them through an evolving business world.

Christian Codrington, a senior executive with the Human Resources Management Association (HRMA), states, "While psychometric testing has been used for decades, the 'gamification' of this type of testing is one way in which technology is changing the landscape of business and the HR profession."

Wasabi Waiter, an interactive video game, was developed by a Silicon Valley company to help companies pick the best people for job openings, according to Codrington – the association's Director of Regulatory Affairs and Member Value.

The job candidate plays the game by taking on the role of a restaurant waiter and deciding how best to meet challenges serving customers.

"Shell Oil and other companies use the game to uncover a prospective employee's creativity, persistence and real-time prioritizing of many small, simultaneous work decisions," said Codrington, a 20-year HR veteran. "Games such as Wasabi Waiter offer employers measurable insights into a prospective employee's strengths and capabilities, and do so in a way not typically done using paper and pencil test. Technology is adding depth as well as enjoyment to the traditional one-on-one or group interview."

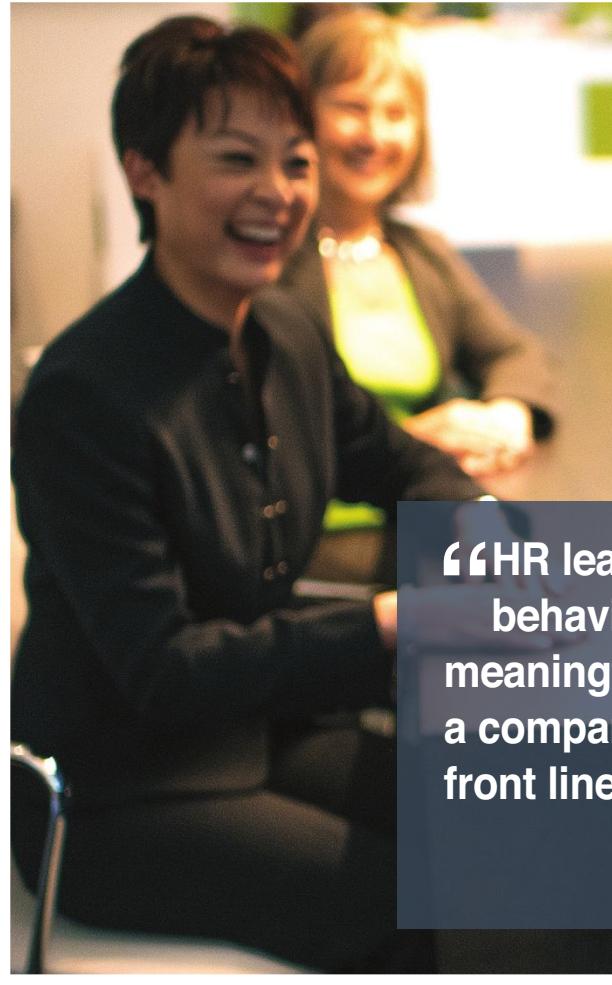
## How to ensure the best 'fit'

Many companies are augmenting existing evaluation and performance tools with similar technologies that capture and analyze behaviours and skills, Codrington said.

He says cost pressures and intense competition in the marketplace are pushing HR executives to make sophisticated decisions using very large data sets that can be analyzed by computers to reveal patterns and trends in human behaviour and interactions. It allows companies to objectively assess and manage an existing employee's behaviour and how to ensure the best 'fit' for prospective employees.

Rather than guessing, employers are able to find correlations in turnover rates of new hires from different recruitment sources or academic institutions. Or determine which initiatives or employee benefits can help their team's best balance work and family stressors to be more productive.

Changes to Work Safe's regulations or Human Rights consider-



**"HR leaders like Janet are tasked with interpreting behavioural and business data, and translating it into meaningful financial impact. They balance the needs of a company's bottom line with the needs of a company's front line."**

Anthony Ariganello, CPA, FCGA, ICD.D  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
Human Resources Management Association (HRMA)

## HUMAN RESOURCES AT A GLANCE

**Total number of HR professionals in B.C.:** 13,635

**Education of HR professionals:** 51 per cent with a Bachelors' degree or higher

**Number of HR professionals with CHRP designation in B.C.:** 3,000

**Number of HRMA members in B.C.:** 5,500

**Percentage of B.C. members with CHRP:** 55 per cent

**Number of CHRP holders in Canada:** 26,000

**Average annual employment income:** \$63,000

**Breakdown of HR professionals in B.C.:** 71 per cent female; 29 per cent male

Sources: HRMA and Statistics Canada household survey (2011)

ations, that attempt to strike a balance between a parent's obligations to caring for their child with the demand of work, all have had their profound effects on how HR professionals do their job, Codrington said.

Telecommuting, for instance, can be fraught with issues for the HR professional trying to advise senior management.

"You are working from home and you slip and fall. That could be a compensable Work Safe BC claim. Has the employer done an assessment of someone's home before allowing the person to work from

"I think one of the transitions that HR professionals have gone through over the past number of years is translating the value of what they are doing into a return on investment," says Marni Johnson, Vice President of HR and Communications for 18 years at the North Vancouver-based credit union. She was a finalist for HRMA's Award of Excellence for innovation last year.

"For example, HR programs that reduce turnover are now developed as part of an overall financial plan of the company — a cost-saving or revenue-boosting measure for the business — rather than just saying

**"I THINK IN THE PAST, HR PEOPLE MIGHT HAVE BEEN ALL ABOUT MAKING EMPLOYEES HAPPY. BUT AT THE END OF THE DAY, THE PURPOSE OF DOING THAT IS TO ENSURE THAT EMPLOYEES WILL DRIVE YOUR BUSINESS FORWARD."**

MARNI JOHNSON, VICE PRESIDENT OF HR AND COMMUNICATIONS,  
BLUE SHORE FINANCIAL

home? Is their workstation ergonomically correct (in the event) that they develop a repetitive strain injury?

A number of Vancouver-based HR professionals who were recognized last year by HRMA for their significant contributions to the field also weighed in on the theme of change:

A senior executive at BlueShore Financial says HR professionals continually prove their value to their companies by expressing it in the language of business — the bottom line.

'we want to keep more people,' she said.

Johnson, who came to HR after first taking a degree in Mathematics and an MBA in marketing, says there is great value in moving HR managers into other areas to learn more about their organization's business. Blueshore has also done that by appointing one of its HR managers to lead the credit union's call centre, a move that will make that person ultimately even more valuable to Blueshore, she said.

BlueShore Financial CEO Chris Catliff is unequivocal about the val-

ue of having a senior HR professional at his side.

"When the entire company is working in concert pursuing service excellence, you can feel it," he said. "The motivation of our team to put in the extra effort is critical to our value proposition."

"Effective HR management underpins this motivation. Marni's contribution as a member of our executive management team ensures the HR function helps drive our business strategy."

Executives like Johnson who have committed to the HR profession post-MBA (or other professional designations such as CPA or LLB), attain their Certified Human Resources Professional (CHRP) designation, says Codrington. The national designation is administered in BC and Yukon by HRMA.

HRMA ultimately serves the public interest by establishing standards for the profession and developing a code of ethics to ensure its members "do the right thing" in their work. "HRMA acts as other professional associations do — we balance the need to advance the profession while protecting the public interest," he said. "Members of the public may not be able to choose their HR leader, but they can certainly report misconduct and it will be taken very seriously."

In addition, the dramatically changing work landscape also makes it that much more important for HR professionals to stay current with their discipline. They do that through HRMA's professional development programs, which include recognizing emerging professionals.

Fiona Ho, an HR generalist working in the Burnaby office of Fortinet, a California-based network security provider, was winner of the HRMA's Rising Star Award. She has found that the CHRP designation and continuing education have been invaluable to her.

"Having the process makes me better-rounded," said Ho. "With the CHRP designation, I've proven my professional competence to myself and to HR veterans, and I have positioned myself as a knowledgeable business professional to my company's leaders."

**CHRP**  
Certified Human Resources Professional

## WHAT IS A CHRP?

A Certified Human Resources Professional designation (CHRP) bestowed on an individual who has met and maintained certain standards of human resources practice. The standards are set nationally and overseen in BC by the Human Resources Management Association (HRMA), a 5,500-member provincial association responsible for the profession in British Columbia and the Yukon. First established in the mid-1990s, over 55 per cent of all members currently have the CHRP designation. There are certain requirements for an HR professional to obtain and maintain the designation:

- Hold a minimum of a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university.
- Write a national knowledge exam that assesses their HR knowledge and skills.
- Have at least three year's experience in an HR role within the last decade (one year in Canada with that experience covering two of nine functional HR areas and involve a certain level of autonomy in applying that knowledge).
- Maintain their association membership and recertify his or her CHRP every three years.
- Maintain an active HRMA membership for the duration of the CHRP path and upon becoming a CHRP designate.

The designation's benefits include documented experience in business strategy, professional practice, engagement, employee relations, financial management and other functional or technical competencies. A 2013 report\* released by Payscale and HRPA states that business recognizes the value of CHRP, noting a 70-per-cent increase in job postings requiring CHRP; 50-per-cent higher income for CHRPs in key industrial sectors and 13-per-cent higher pay for managers who have the CHRP designation.

A CHRP designation is recognized throughout Canada.

\*2013 Payscale survey, created in partnership with HRPA, contrasted the career trajectories and income levels of those with and without the CHRP designation.

## HRMA: QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**Anthony Ariganello, CEO of the Human Resources Management Association (HRMA), was asked a number of key questions about the human resources profession. Here are his responses:**

**Q: How has the human resources profession changed over time?**

**Ariganello:** Over the past 25 years increasing regulation, technology and globalization have resulted in significant changes in the way the world does business. Entire areas of business have been restructured and re-engineered through cutbacks, layoffs, and mergers and acquisitions. Once, HR was responsible for the essentials of employment — hiring, firing, benefits, etc. Now the HR challenges in today's business environment are great: How can a company staff through such big changes? How are brands supported by a company's culture? How does a board quantify leadership? These are weighty, complex decisions that today's HR executives, many



**Anthony Ariganello, CEO of the Human Resources Management Association (HRMA)**

of whom have MBAs, CPAs, LLBs and other advanced business credentials, wrestle with every day.

Furthermore, HR professionals are responsible for gathering deep, rich insights about performance and employee engagement, and for providing financially-based decisions about human resources based on those insights. That dichotomy — the

impersonal facts and the very personal impacts — is what is attracting emerging HR professionals. They are hungry to meet business's most challenging situations head on.

**Q: How does your organization, HRMA, support the professional development of human resources professionals in BC?**

**Ariganello:** We are focused on the advancement of professional people practices. We administer the CHRP (Certified Human Resources Professionals) designation, similar to accountants and the CPA. We are a member of the Canadian Council of Human Resources Associations (CCHRA). Through this national body we contribute to the setting of national standards for the CHRP and in doing so, we advance professional standards right here at home. Like other professional associations, we offer our members continuing education opportunities, which include courses, mentorship and leadership initiatives.

**Q: What is the value of having a national designation for the profession?**

**Ariganello:** As with other professions, the value of a national designation is portability for members, as well as having a standard of certification that every jurisdictional association can administer and support. It is the same set of criteria, and the same exam province to province. If a member moves from B.C. to Quebec, their CHRP will be recognized. The agreement on internal trade allows members to move around the country and keep their professional designation and practice.

**Q: Do you have to be an HR professional or an association member to take HRMA courses and webinars?**

**Ariganello:** No on both counts. Courses, webinars and papers are available to members and non-members. For example, many of the courses we offer as continuing education to our CHRP designees cover

topics of general interest to other professionals. Topics such as bullying in the workplace, women in leadership, and performance management may be of interest to many different business professionals. Non-members can attend our symposia and our annual conference, the latter of which features noted speakers such as Ryan Estis, Brad Karsch, Arlene Dickinson, and Daniel Pink.

**Q: What are some training and professional development services you offer?**

**Ariganello:** Succession planning is a great example. Few organizations are well prepared for succession planning, for replacing a key person who dies or leaves an organization because they have found another job. Another is offering information about how to deal with harassment in the workplace. Or we may offer employee performance evaluations, what the practices are, and what should be done with respect to offering feedback on an ongoing basis.

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