Preface

Aim of This Book

In 1998, a highly innovative film, *Antz*, directed by Eric Darnell and Tim Johnson, was released. In the first scene of the movie, Ant Z 4195 is talking to his psychoanalyst and saying:

"...and my job, don't get me started on, cause it really annoys me…I feel physically inadequate, I, I, my whole life I've never been able to lift 10 times my own body weight and when you get down to it, handling dirt is…yuck, you know is not my idea of a rewarding career. It's this whole gung-ho super-organism thing that I, I, you know I can't get, I try but I can't get it. I mean you know, what is it, I'm supposed to do everything for the colony, and what about my needs, what about me? I mean I gotta believe there's someplace out there that's better than this! Otherwise I'd just curl up in a larva position and weep! The whole system out there just makes me feel...insignificant!"

Z 4195 is striving to reconcile his own individuality with the communal work of the ant colony. Our unhappy and depressed ant is working for a traditional hierarchical organization, where people are not treated as valuable assets and IT systems are not yet implemented. Even worse, he is currently working for an organization that may have neither examined people management practices, nor made a real connection between people and organizational performance. While this behavior is still prevalent in many of today's companies, we are presenting a book about e-HRM, about how IT is changing traditional HRM functions, about how e-HRM practices are implemented. Could this be a paradox? We hope so, because as Junipier (1996) pointed out: "Paradox is

an excellent creativity facilitator; it delivers a seismic jolt to dominant ideas, themselves the most efficient suppressor of original thinking" (p. 19). We need creative facilitators to develop the new e-HRM landscape.

The above presents one of our oldest concerns about managing people: Most organizations are far from considering people as their most important asset. They are also far from applying common sense practices such as those to be found in Pfeffer's book, *The Human Equation* (Harvard Business School Press, 1996). These organizations are now entering the knowledge era, using IT solutions to solve their old HRM problems in one out of 10 cases, and in an uncreative way. Those in the world of HRM are being accused of living in an ivory tower, managing the human side of their organizations in ways that lack relevance in the new information era. The impetus for the HRM change comes from recognition of recent developments in the HRM profession and a realization that current practices do not reflect those changes, especially those concerning IT strategies. The problem often results in policies, practices, and strategies that may be outdated.

Organizations are progressively incorporating ITCs into their processes, using different tools and solutions. These tools are applied in a wide variety of ways (i.e., manufacturing resource planning, office automation, computer-supported cooperative work, distributed teams, supply chain, enterprise-wide resource planning, or virtual integration). The entry into service of the first high-capacity transatlantic cable in 1956 and the launch of Sputnik in 1957 marked the beginnings of the era of global information exchange. In 1956, for the first time in history, the number of white-collar workers exceeded that of blue-collar workers (Naisbitt, 1984).

The factor we would stress in this growth in TICs is not the increase in the amount, capacity, or inter-connectivity of technology in organizations. The strategic key lies in the organization's ability to integrate these technologies into their current business processes, and also in their ability to reorganize the said processes (Orlikowski, 1999, p. 3). And this is what this book is all about.

Content of This Book

e-HRM: Managing Knowledge People responds to the challenge of documenting recognizable, innovative, and creative approaches to e-HRM. Its aim is to define and carry forward the debate in a complex and versatile matter.

Future research will continue the process of clarifying and documenting the evolution of e-HRM. In the meantime, however, human resources management researchers, faculty, practitioners, and consultants may find the ideas and experiences offered in this book genuinely helpful and illuminating.

This book is presented in four sections — the first intended to be more general in nature, the following three devoted to specific aspects of the HRM field in the new information era. Section I, *The Cutting-Edge in HRM,* presents an overview of how ITCs are modifying general HRM processes and functions. This is the aim of the first three contributions.

In the first chapter, *Web-Based Organizing in Traditional Brick-and-Mortar Companies: The Impact on HR*, Jaap Paauwe, Elaine Farndale, and Roger Williams, based mostly on their personal experience, focus on how old economy organizations are developing new business models. These models are changing both customers' and suppliers' relationships with the organization and, of course, e-commerce strategy as a whole. With these new models being implemented, the potential implications for HRM need to be explored. The effects of Web-based organizing in HRM, including workers' selection, training and development, learning, trust-building within an organization, and knowledge sharing, among others, are discussed. One relevant conclusion of their analysis is that "internal improvements, necessary for the successful transference of business to the Internet, will enable the HR function to justify its existence in financial terms."

Scott A. Davis and Robert F. Calderón, in their chapter *Integrating Handheld Computer Technology into HR Research and Practice*, present potential applications of handheld computers for HR practice and research. They anticipate major improvements and widespread implementation of wireless networks with resulting implications for worker mobility, availability, and communication. These factors will impact work planning, schedules, conducting meetings, organizational data sharing, and an optimum balance between work and life. Their model, which integrates empirical research and practical knowledge, will be useful for those researchers and practitioners eager to explore handheld computer technology applied to strategic HR planning and management.

Mousumi Bhattacharya and Christopher L. Huntley's chapter, *Social Network Mapping Software: New Frontiers in HRM,* discuss the connections between social network mapping software and the effectiveness of HRM programs. Their study is based upon research into social networks and the effects of these networks on both business processes and HRM. The authors clearly show the uses of information on social networks in HRM processes

and what information is generated by social network mapping software (SNMS). They classify the functionality offered by SNMS in the categories of data collection, descriptive modeling, and decision support. They also discuss how each of these functions provides information relevant to different HRM functions.

Section II, *Redesigning HR Administrative Processes*, explains how some HRM functions, such as e-recruitment and developing appropriate systems for employee relationships, are being implemented in the knowledge era.

As hiring qualified employees is a critical organizational decision in the knowledge-based economy, In Lee, in his chapter *E-Recruiting: Categories and Analysis of Fortune 100 Career Web Sites*, analyzes the corporate career Web sites of the Fortune 100 companies. He identifies 33 attributes that characterize corporate career Web sites and groups them into four major areas: recruiting methods, job search tools, job application tools, and information on organizational attributes. Knowing how other organizations are using Web sites to recruit their human capital is a first step towards finding breakthrough ideas for one's own organization.

In the next chapter, *Employee Self-Service HR Portal Case Study: Access, Content, & Application*, Andrew Stein and Paul Hawking examine the development of the human resources (HR) ESS portal. Without any doubt, the added value in this chapter consists of the case studies of three Australian organizations that have implemented an ESS portal. The authors show the information and process focus of these organizations' ESS portals, which are used to place the organizations into Brosche's (2002) portal development model.

Focusing on the development of human resources, Constant D. Beugré's chapter, *Human Resource Portals and the Protean Career: A Three-Factor Model*, develops a three-point model (individual attributes, characteristics of the human resource portals, and organizational factors) to describe the factors in the effective use of Web-based human resource services. On the basis of this model, he argues that the effective use of Web-based human resource services plays an important role in the management of the protean career.

As organizations have started to recognize e-learning as having the power to transform the performance, knowledge, and skills landscape (Gunasekaran, McNeil, & Shaul, 2002, p. 44), Section III, *E-Learning Strategies*, concentrates on the e-training and e-learning world.

Pamela D. Sherer and Timothy Shea, in their chapter *Keeping Up with the Corporate University: Resources for HRM Faculty and Practitioners*, dis-

cuss the major factors that influence the growth and role of the corporate university within organizations: in terms of strategy and human resources, knowledge management, and technology and e-learning. They also include in their chapter an annotated compendium of key resources in each of these areas, especially Internet resources. These resources are a good starting point to begin digging deeper into this rapidly changing subject.

E-Learning Strategies of Italian Companies, a chapter by Anna Comacchio and Annachiara Scapolan, is devoted to the empirical study of country-specific e-learning models, focusing on the e-learning experience of Italian companies in the pharmaceutical and banking industries. How are companies implementing e-learning? How are they analyzing the most important features of the e-learning strategies: users, contents, infrastructure, and service and support? The two cases presented will help the reader to answer these questions.

Section IV, *Managing IT and Organizational Changes*, discusses the processes for achieving success when implementing IT solutions within organizations.

In the chapter, *Is Organizational e-Democracy Inevitable? The Impact of Information Technologies on Communication Effectiveness,* Bernadette M. Watson, Gavin M. Schwarz, and Elizabeth Jones consider the relationships between social identity and e-democracy. They also discuss the inevitability of organizational e-democracy in organizations pursuing information technology changes. They investigate perceptions of changes in effective communication during the implementation of organizational change in a hospital. Their findings are discussed in terms of the implications that arise for HR practitioners.

Finally, Joseph Logan, in his chapter *Managing and Practicing OD in an IT Environment: A Structured Approach to Developing IT Project Teams*, outlines a framework for improving success in IT projects by leveraging the organization development (OD) practitioner's expertise in fostering cooperation and learning in teams. In the author's opinion, failures in IT projects are caused by a lack of integration of OD and IT.

In summary, this book's content sets out to highlight the trends in theory and practice which are likely to influence human resource management practices in the IT era, to examine innovative e-HR strategies from a variety of empirical and theory-based perspectives, to provide insightful analysis, and to promote the discovery and dissemination of innovative theories and best practices. But there are important strategic HRM issues missing, such as, for example: e-work and teleworking, the development of new industrial relations

models, managing the e-workforce in multinational organizations, e-ethics, or managing values and IT. Of course, some critical reflections on competencies and abilities should have been considered (i.e., IT competencies for an HR manager, e-leadership and e-team skills, e-facilitation and e-coaching, e-trust, or e-creativity — developing skills of creative application of IT on organizations). So, there is still a lot work to do!

The Book's Audience

e-HRM: Managing Knowledge People presents insights gained by leading professionals from the practice, research, and consulting side of the e-HRM field. This book should be useful to a variety of constituencies who are interested in the interrelationships between human resources management and IT, including managers who treat their personnel as a key factor for organizational success, leaders wishing to develop the human side of their organizations, IT experts, human resources managers, researchers, consultants, and practitioners. Each audience may have different levels of interest in the theoretical concepts, practical experiences, and empirical data presented in this book. As we are exploring an evolving discipline, we assume that any of these readers will begin, but not complete, an exploration of the e-HRM new world. Enjoy the reading and enjoy the learning!

References

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