Chapter VII

Keeping Up with the Corporate University: Resources for HRM Faculty and Practitioners

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Abstract

The number of corporate universities is increasing by leaps and bounds, and the role of corporate universities is rapidly evolving and becoming more tightly integrated with an organization’s strategic planning and assessment. How can HRM faculty and practitioners keep their respective curricula and organizations up to date? The first section of this chapter provides an overview of the current corporate university landscape, discussing the three major factors that influence both their growth and their role in organizations: strategy and human resources, knowledge management, and technology and e-learning. The second section includes an annotated compendium of key resources in each of these areas, especially Internet resources.
Introduction

Corporations have been in the business of training and developing employees for a long time. It was estimated that U.S. companies would spend approximately $56.8 billion (Galvin, 2002) on education and training in 2002 as a means both for keeping employee skills, knowledge, and abilities updated, and to better retain top employees (Van Buren & Erskine, 2002; Dillich, 2000; Koprowski, 2000). The rapid development of corporate universities, especially during the last few years, has proven effective in meeting these educational needs (Vine & Palsule, 1999).

The idea of a corporate university is not new. Meister (1998) describes the General Motors Institute, founded in 1927, as the first. However, the origins of modern corporate universities can be traced to the period of the late 1950s through the 1960s. During that time Disney University, General Electric’s Crotonville Management Development Institute, McDonald’s Hamburger University, and several others were established. Jarvis (2001) indicates that these in-house training programs were developed in large part to supplement the traditional, off-site education that their staff members were receiving.

Over the past 15 years, the number of corporate universities has increased from 400 to over 2,000; that number is expected to surpass 3,700 by the end of this decade (Anderson, 2001). Corporate universities are found in virtually all industries: consulting, high tech, military, entertainment, financial services, healthcare, automobile, and fast food, to name a few. Examples of domestic and international companies with corporate universities include American Skandia, Black and Decker, Booz Allen Hamilton, Daimler-Chrysler, Defense Acquisition, Dell, Disney, eArmy, General Motors, Harley-Davidson, Infosys Technologies Limited, Intel, Isvor Fiat, McDonald’s, Land Rover, Motorola, the North Shore - Long Island Jewish Health System, Oracle, the Tennessee Valley Authority, Schwab, and Unisys.

Of particular interest is the fact that many corporate universities are now extensively involved with their organization’s strategic planning processes (Carter, Giber, & Goldsmith, 2001). As a result, leaders of human resource management and development departments in these organizations are rapidly becoming repositioned to the highest levels of organizational influence and decision making, including the introduction of a new position, the Chief Learning Officer (CLO) (Baldwin & Danielson, 2000). Utilizing the rapid advancement of e-learning and e-human resource development technologies,
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