Corporate websites set to dominate e-recruitment

ELECTRONIC recruitment is growing rapidly, but methods are evolving, with corporate websites looking likely to supplant 'job boards', and digital television and mobile telephones likely to prove as popular as personal computers for conducting recruitment on the internet. Nevertheless, new research shows, it will be a very long time before traditional recruitment methods are totally supplanted.

The research, conducted by Spanish business school IESE and sponsored by Ideal Job Internet Ltd, was commissioned specially by the European Association of Personnel Management for its 20th annual congress to be held in Geneva, 26-29 June. IESE surveyed HR people in 10,000 firms across Europe, as well as interviewing specialist electronic recruitment companies.

Early findings, research associate Inés Sáenz-Diez told *WorldLink*, are revealing major investment by companies into their own websites, where they post job offers. Often the technical management of the site is outsourced.

But many 'job boards', where jobs from different organisations are posted, are predicted to disappear or at least be supplanted by specialised e-recruiting companies which do everything from tracking applicants to managing response.

Disadvantages of corporate websites, the survey shows, include lack of in-house technical know-how, cost of complementary printed advertising, the work involved in updating sites and the overwhelming number of applications and CVs generated.

Outside online recruiting sites also have drawbacks, however. The research highlights confidentiality and privacy issues, the competitive nature of the marketplace and a tendency to quantity rather than quality.

A summary of the complete findings will be presented in Geneva by Jose Pin, Professor of HRM at IRCO-IESE.

Work-life balance

Another study commissioned for the Congress will look at work-life balance and managerial burn-out in European companies. It has been sponsored by the Swiss Federal Administration's Personnel Office and the key findings will be presented by Norbert Thom, Professor of HRM and Director of the Institute for Organisation and Personnel at the University of Bern.

Other keynote speakers include Insead HRM Professor Manfred Kets de Vries, author and generation X specialist Bruce Tulgan, 'Funky business' academic Kjell Nordström from Stockholm and London Business School's Linda Gratton.

A number of sessions have been designed to appeal to international HR managers: Professor Susan Schneider from HEC, University of Geneva will give a keynote address on multicultural teams and managing across cultures, as well as leading one of two parallel sessions on international leadership; the other, on developing and retaining talent, will feature a poet-cum-playwright and a Master of London's restored Shakespearian theatre, the Globe.

Philip Rosenzweig, Professor of Strategy and Management at IMD, will talk about how to take advantage of the diversity in a global workforce; and another multi-panel session will deal with managing and developing a global workforce.

In addition thee are two special workshops – on human resource strategies for globalisation and on international management development.

● *www.eapm2001.ch.*

Violence at work on the increase

THOSE GENERALLY considered to be at greatest risk of physical assault or verbal abuse while at work are the public service and 'front line' or 'customer facing' employees. In the UK the number of violent and aggressive incidents directed at health service workers rose by more than a fifth (22%) in the year to April 2000, according to a survey of 45 hospitals.*

Employer response has included the installation of closed circuit television, the employment of security guards and controlled access to certain areas. One hospital employs a 'management of aggression adviser' to continually monitor violence levels.

Most employers in the survey provide staff with some instruction on how to deal with violence; courses range from personal security awareness to 'break-free' techniques and training in control and restraint.

Meanwhile the UK's Health and Safety Commission has launched a new three-year programme to raise awareness of the problem. "Some people assume an incident only counts as violence if they wind up in hospital or at least black and blue," said a spokesman. "In reality it encompasses a whole range of abuse."

While statistics show public sector workers are at most risk because they are dealing with people under emotional strain, incidents of workplace violence are also occurring more frequently in the private sector – especially in those companies that offer a service.

*'Getting to grips with workplace violence', Health Service Report 29, IRS London, Winter 2000/01.

WorldLink

welcomes news stories,

announcements of

events and ideas for articles.

These should be accompanied

by a telephone number and

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Next issue

The next issue of WorldLink will

be published in July 2001.

Please submit contributions

by 7 May 2001.

BOOKSHELF

BOB MORTON, Head of HRD (Northern Europe) for Ciba Specialty Chemicals, reviews three books which he considers warrant a place in the international HR professional's bookcase

Building cross-cultural competence
How to create wealth from conflicting values

Authors: Charles Hampden–Turner and Fons Trompenaars

Publishers: John Wiley & Sons

ISBN: 0 471 49527 1
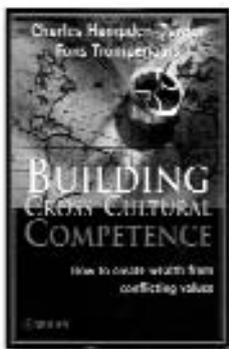
More and more companies are organising across borders in order to improve profitability and gain competitive advantage in regional and global markets. The seamless organisation is now with us, especially in the field of technology where work is routinely moved across time and geographical zones without interruption. Resources of all types now flow relatively freely across national borders.

The implications of the seamless organisation for people management are that policies and practices have to facilitate the process of working across time, distance and culture – not only in a practical operational sense, but also in creating a mindset in managers of thinking and operating internationally.

One of the fundamental challenges for HR professionals is to identify and train managers who, although they were raised and experienced in one culture, can effectively interact with and manage people raised in different cultures. The reality today is that most companies consciously or unconsciously experience one or more aspects of international people management, and the successes and failures of these companies are directly related to how well they handle these challenges and those of operating across cultural boundaries.

This book therefore is essential reading for both HR and business managers. It provides a unique way of understanding the tensions of globalisation. It is based on 14 years of research involving nearly 50,000 managers across the world. It compares the cultural values of more than 40 nations with a rich wealth of stories and business examples. The authors demonstrate how cross-cultural competence

Bob Morton is co-editor with Pat Joynt of 'The Global HR Manager', published in 1999 by the UK Institute of Personnel and Development.

and the reconciliation of cultural differences can help whole organisations to grow wealthier and wiser.

It takes the previous work of the authors to new levels of insight and provides a higher degree of understanding of cross-cultural competence and a practical guide to actions. It combines an impressive theoretical texture with practical advice.

The basis of the book is the 'significant discovery' after 18 years of research by the authors "that foreign cultures are not arbitrarily or randomly different from one another. They are instead mirror images of one another's values, reversals of the order and sequence of looking and learning." Once we grasp this 'reverse view', everything the foreign culture says and does falls into place.

Readers of Fons Trompenaars' previous books will recognise the six value dimensions:

- *Universalism* (rules, codes, laws and generalisations) – *Particularism* (exceptions, special circumstances, unique relations)
- *Individualism* (personal freedom, human rights, competitiveness) – *Communitarianism* (social responsibility, harmonious relations, cooperation)
- *Specificity* (reductive, atomistic, analytic, objective) – *Diffusion* (holistic, elaborative, synthetic, relational)
- *Achieved status* (what you've done, your track record) – *Ascribed status* (who you are, your potential and connections)
- *Inner direction* (conscience and convictions are located inside) – *Outer direction* (examples and influence are located outside)
- *Sequential time* (time is a race along a set course) – *Synchronous time* (time is a dance of fine coordinations)

These are used throughout the book to demonstrate the principle of mirror reversal and to investigate the dilemmas faced when working in the global economy. An example of this using the first two dimensions is to ask the question, Which came first – the universal rule or the particular event? Which is first – the whole or the part? There is no one answer to such dilemmas and to solve them is culture's role. "The resourceful individual comes first," says American culture. "The rice growing village comes first," says Chinese culture. "Think circles," say the authors.

They elaborate on this by pointing out that, "When we compare our conventional order of values with the reversals used by foreign cultures, we discover that what we see clearly, some foreigners miss. What they see clearly, most of us

miss." "To be effective," say Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, managers "must perceive and think in both directions." This is another way of saying we must learn to think in circles, or cybernetically. This form of thinking is already essential for managers in multinational companies and is a skill which needs to be developed in order to succeed in the global economy.

The book is organised so that each odd-numbered chapter explores a value dimension and the dilemmas it contains, and then the even-numbered chapter describes how the dilemmas have been reconciled by using storytelling and business case studies. The stories and humour used are witty and wonderfully illustrated with cartoons which capture the essence of the dilemmas. The use of humour and stories gives life to the dilemmas and brings insight into their reconciliation.

Once the reader has grasped the concept of reversals and of 'thinking in circles' that Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner use to help us understand the dilemmas and reconcile them, this book becomes a practical and powerful influence on management thinking. By applying the thinking to business cases as well as HR practices, we can prevent disastrous decisions and improve working relationships.

This is a book where even the appendices are as interesting and thought-provoking as the main chapters. The intellectual and experiential origins of dilemma theory are outlined and the theory itself summarised. There are exercises in reconciliation using a step-by-step process which struck me as being vital not only in the business world but also in the world of international relations. Diplomats and politicians would do well do apply the wisdom in this book.

Culture.com
Building corporate culture in the connected workplace
Authors: Peg Neuhauser, Ray Bender and Kirk Stromberg
Publishers: John Wiley & Sons
ISBN: 0 471 64539 7

The shift to e-business is being heralded as the biggest change in the way the world functions since the industrial revolution. Old rules of doing business are changing or no longer apply. The speed and complexity of change is difficult for people to absorb and the business world is frantically trying to develop and learn the rules of the new economy. However, this learning is often outer directed rather than focused on the changes in corporate culture needed to deliver success in this new business environment.

Culture.com examines the issue of how to create a corporate culture that matches the new .com business strategy. The authors state, "The purpose of this book is to provide a road map for building a corporate culture that can help companies succeed in a connected business world." This is an ambitious target that is met only in part. Many modern business books contain formulaic approaches or 'how to' formats which are at best superficial. However my initial foreboding at reading in the preface that there were 'nine challenges for turning your corporate culture into a .com asset' was largely dispelled as I read on. This book asks some very relevant questions about corporate culture in the .com age. In particular, I found the richness of the stories and many of the practical tips and questions contained in each chapter to be valuable. These questions prevent the book falling into the prescriptive trap and 'how to' formula that so many business books of recent years have pandered to. It actually helps you to think.

The book is well structured, with a good preface which briefly and clearly outlines the format and content. It also contains in a footnote a simple but useful definition of the terms e-business and e-commerce, which are used throughout the book.

The first chapter summarises the corporate culture issues facing traditional companies moving into a 'clicks and mortar' world. Chapters 2 to 10 then address each of the nine culture challenges every company must confront when moving into the e-business world.

The examples and stories that illustrate the book are drawn from an extensive and impressive list of companies. The questions throughout the book are designed to get the reader started in asking 'so what?' and to stimulate thinking about what practical steps can be taken in their own company. This is useful for any HR or OD practitioner working in the e-business world or facing the task of transitioning from a traditional culture to one more aligned to the e-business world.

Intercultural services
A worldwide buyer's guide and sourcebook
Author: Gary M. Wederspahn
Publishers: Butterworth Heinemann
ISBN: 0 87719 344 4

The more companies operate internationally, the greater the impact on the various business functions. Practitioners in each function must develop the skills, knowledge and experience in the international arena which will help their companies succeed in this often volatile environment. This is particularly true for the HRM function. Effective people management is essential as international expansion and operation place additional stress on resources, particularly people.

Over the past 20 years the provision and range of intercultural services has proliferated, and Gary Wederspahn's work is timely in that it provides a cohesive and relevant source book, not only to those seeking advice and access to such services for the first time, but equally for seasoned HR practitioners.

The opening chapter introduces the field of intercultural services and contains the language and definitions needed to better understand it. Chapters 2 to 4 deal with the factors that generate the need for such services, and chapters 5 to 9 focus on tools, techniques and resources for meeting cross-cultural challenges. Chapter 9, which deals with suppliers, fills a gap which many source books fail to cover; and its practical tips will help to improve working relationships with suppliers.

The latter section of the book, which I found the most useful part, contains descriptions of services and products and, importantly, tips on when and how best to use them. Each chapter also includes a set of action steps which will be especially valuable to those getting involved in managing across borders for the first time.

The final chapter examines the case for intercultural services and helps the reader to develop a rationale for using them. It provides not only a humanistic rationale but also succinctly states the business case which covers affordability, effectiveness and the competitive advantage to be gained by using intercultural services as a business tool.

Throughout the book there are comprehensive references (including websites and email addresses), and the checklists and examples it contains demonstrate

Trends and tensions in Mi

Malaysia has its Bangladeshi workers, South Africa its Mozambiquans, the EU its North Africans and the USA its Latinos – all are essential to keeping these economies working but there is a tendency for their presence to be resented. The oil rich states of the Middle East face this issue on a much larger scale – huge dependency on foreign workers but at the same time a need to create opportunities for host country nationals. Here Wes Harry draws on his experience in the banking industry in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries to describe some of the stresses on both national and expatriate workers and their employers

Within Islam, the religion of the Middle East which forbids 'riba' or usury, banking can be an anomaly. An Islamic bank, for instance, neither charges nor gives interest. In fact, few banks in the area can claim to follow Islamic practice; an exception is the Al Rajhi Banking & Investment Corporation in Saudi Arabia.

But banking finances projects, it is the channel which moves wealth – created by exploitation of natural resources such as oil and gas – to the local population and it creates jobs; so it is vital to economic development. And it appeals to young nationals: it is perceived to offer a clean and comfortable work environment, undemanding working hours, job security and good pay. However the reality does not always match the image.

Throughout the region pay scales have rarely moved in 15 or 20 years. Governments refuse to adjust civil service and state-owned organisations' pay and benefits, which creates distortions in the marketplace that carry over into banks' and other companies' pay scales. It is not unusual, therefore, to find new staff paid substantially more than existing staff for the same job.

Exceptions have to be made to pay policies to bring in staff with key skills, but existing staff can only receive an increase in pay through promotion, regrading of their job or by moving to another employer. Favoured staff (who may come from the same group or community as the boss or may even be related to him) are rewarded, whereas those who lack influence or 'wasta' remain on the same pay for many years. Pay becomes related to the person rather than the job they do. In one non-banking organisation employing over 20,000 staff there is no conventional link between jobs and pay – for example the general manager of HR is paid less than 60 per cent of the salary of his secretary.

The consequent severe distortion of internal relativities has a serious adverse impact on staff morale, on attitudes to performance and on productivity. Some banks, particularly subsidiaries and associates of foreign banks such as HSBC, Citicorp and ABN AMRO, use job evaluation and share salary data to correct internal and external imbalances, but directors of locally-owned banks are often reluctant to do so, lest it increases salary costs.

Swamped

Notwithstanding this, employers are swamped with unsolicited applications either directly from applicants or from those seeking jobs for relations or friends. Rather than reject a candidate and risk upsetting the customers or staff who supported him (it usually is a 'him' – see below), many companies leave applications in limbo! Employers are reluctant to advertise a vacancy knowing that applicants or those canvassing on their behalf will swamp them. In the United Arab Emirates (UAE) the government recently estimated that it receives between 150 and 200 applications from citizens for each vacancy it has. On the other hand many of those with useful skills do not wish to apply for a job because they fear being rejected in favour of those with more assertive supporters.

Many of the nationals seeking employment have been educated in subjects that are little if at all in demand within the modern economy. They prefer to study philosophy, arts and social sciences rather than technical subjects such as engineering

and finance. Moreover many of them do not have the work discipline demanded by employers, such as attending on time and concentrating on work. Older workers who have learned 'on the job' and who have risen on the basis of length of service are also ill-equipped to meet the changing demands of the workplace. Family commitments for old and young take priority over those of the employer so, for example, taking children to school is seen as a legitimate reason for poor timekeeping.

Family commitments and traditions keep the proportion of women in employment at a low percentage in most of the Gulf States, although Bahrain and Kuwait are exceptions, with a number of banks having heads of human resources who are local women, including Burgan Bank in Kuwait and HSBC in Bahrain. There is a gradual change in attitudes towards female employment, but still many families consider that to have a woman working in a job which brings them into contact with non-family members brings 'Aib' or shame.

Some banks have established all female branches or sub offices where women customers are served by female staff. In banks in Saudi Arabia which have such branches, there is no contact between male and female staff (including the boss) except in writing or by telephone. These restrictions on women, while understandable in terms of social norms, mean that there is a large proportion of the host country's nationals who cannot be employed.

Not surprisingly, therefore, there has been considerable dependence on foreign workers, but that really has led to a two-tier workforce. Virtually all employers pay

foreign workers less than nationals. The only exceptions are the seconded expatriates who have come from another part of an international organisation or the few specialists (usually from North America and Europe) who are paid more than nationals.

In addition to being on a higher pay scale, nationals will usually get a range of other benefits such as marriage allowance, children's allowance (which could amount to three or more times' basic salary for those with a very large family) and vacation allowance. Expatriates will not get such allowances and will usually have to pay for medical and education facilities – free for nationals, as well as fees to a local sponsor and/or the high costs of residence permits.

But the fact is that employers are quite content to pay very low wages to foreigners, knowing that, if one expatriate leaves, there are thousands of highly-skilled and well-trained bank staff from poor regions of the world waiting to take their place. For those from south Asia and parts of the Arab world outside the Gulf States such low wages are high in relation to the potential income at home. The personnel clerk on $8,000 a year may be able to save and send money home to Bangladesh and his Filipino colleague, who is the personnel officer on $15,000, will also be able to save, even though these are not high salaries in terms of European or North American standards or even in relation to the expectations of the local citizens. The national head of HR will expect to be paid 15 or more times as much as the clerk.

In most GCC countries labour law requires that employment be offered to local citizens, then to nationals of other GCC countries, then other Arabs and finally to other foreigners. However in states such as the UAE foreigners from south Asia are probably over half the total population. Some of these will have been born in the country and spent their whole lives there. It is not unusual to find three generations of expatriates living and working in many of the GCC countries.

'Trapped'

Once employed, it becomes very difficult for expatriate staff to move to other employers because of government restrictions on transfer. Most expatriates are forbidden to change employers and – in the categories of staff allowed to move – the expatriate often has to pay a fee to his sponsor to let him change. It is also difficult to find employment back home for those staff who come from India, Pakistan and other countries where strong trade unions control recruitment and re-employment. Such workers are thus 'trapped' and willingly work for lower salaries than nationals. They will often do all they can to keep their job and are reluctant to share, or increase, knowledge or to move out of a narrow area of expertise. Some who lose their jobs drift into day labour, which is paid less than $3 a day, or they stay on illegally and risk heavy jail sentences.

These expatriate workers make up 30 per cent of the labour force in Saudi Arabia and over 80 per cent of those in the UAE – probably more than 95 per cent of the workers in the private sector. Having lots of cheap foreign labour was fine when the population of the Gulf States was low, but for three decades the national populations have been expanding at an annual rate of 3 to 4 per cent. Now there is severe unemployment among citizens of many states. Saudi American Bank estimates that youth unemployment in Saudi Arabia is over 15 per cent for males.

There are also high levels of under-employment, particularly in government departments and state-owned organisations. In the days of high government surplus income, creating 'jobs' was a means of passing wealth to the indigenous population; productivity and performance were not required. A UN advisory mission has estimated that over 40 per cent of civil service jobs in some GCC countries are not needed.

Levels of unemployment will rise as, for example in Saudi Arabia, over 100,000 male graduates enter the employment market each year. This has caused governments to impose quotas on employers, particularly banks, to employ a specific percentage of nationals and send back foreign workers. Some job categories are now reserved for nationals – including human resource management in Oman. Oman also insists that banks employ a minimum of 95 per cent Omanis, while the UAE has ordered banks to increase the proportion of nationals by 4 per cent a year. But some banks still only employ 5 per cent citizens. Saudi Arabia has insisted that companies employ a minimum of 10 per cent Saudis. Many banks meet and exceed the targets but all struggle to select the good from the not-so-good performers among the national candidates applying.

HR professionals have to deal with these changing demands and supplies of labour and with the social impact of the changes. They have to be adept at dealing with social issues, government regulations, networks of relationships and diversity. The technical abilities in analysing and designing job requirements, selecting most suitable candidates, managing performance, reward and staff development have to be supplemented by change management and persuasion skills. And all the time the organisational objectives, and in the commercial sector profit generation, have to be at the forefront.

Professional societies and organisations such as Saudi Arabia's Arab Society for Human Resource Management, the Bahrain Society for Training and Development and the Dubai Human Resource Management Forum offer support and guidance to HR practitioners in the region. Those who relish a challenge, enjoy having responsibility and are able to mix well with people from widely different backgrounds have a demanding but interesting time here. ○

Wes Harry is head of HR at a large bank in the Middle East. He has a PhD in international HRM from Strathclyde University and has previously worked as a senior HR manager in Africa, South East Asia and other Gulf Region countries. He would like to hear from readers interested in 'localisation' or replacing expatriates with host country nationals: wesharry@hotmail.com.

The reality behind the

Cheryl Troy, Vice President for Human Resources at Edgewater Technologies in Wakefield, Massachusetts, USA, was one of seven people killed by fellow employee Michael McDermott last December. He had been recently counselled by Ms Troy concerning a levy about to be placed on his wages by the Internal Revenue Service, but he apparently had no history of violence and did not conduct himself on the job in any way to alert staff and management to potential violence.

Mike Losey, past President of the WFPMA and of the US Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), to which Ms Troy belonged, considers the incidence of workplace violence from a US perspective and suggests some preventative measures employers can take

There is nothing new about workplace violence and tragedy, but there has been a shift in emphasis. We were reminded recently with the death of Rose Freeman, the last survivor of the Triangle Shirtwaist Company fire of 1911, when 120 of her co-workers perished because they were locked in, that history has tended to report mostly deaths or injuries resulting from employer indifference to health and safety. Or, in the US at least, company owners, afraid of strong trade unions, attempting to crush workers' organisational efforts with violence so great the clashes were given names like battles of war. But today's workplace violence is more likely to involve employee against employee.

In 1995 the American Dialect Society announced that the most original new phrase of the year was 'Going postal',

a piece of slang which grew out of well-publicised cases of workplace violence, not least in the US Postal Service. The common definition is someone who 'acts irrationally, often violently, from stress at work'.

In a 1999 SHRM study based on US practices during the period January 1996 to July 1999, 57 per cent of those HR professionals responding claimed that they had witnessed a violent incident during this period, a 19 per cent increase over a study done three years earlier.

The most common form of violence was verbal threat, which accounted for 31 per cent of cases; pushing and shoving and other physical contact represented 19 per cent; fewer than 2 per cent involved stabbing or shooting.

The primary explanation cited for such incidents was personality conflict (55 per cent), while family or marital problems, frequently involving a non-employee participant, accounted for 36 per cent; work-related stress, the customary and presumed contributor to workplace violence, accounted for only one out of four cases.

A recent US Postal Service study concluded that postal workers are in fact no more likely to physically assault, sexually harass or verbally abuse their co-workers than employees in any other US industry; and, moreover, are only a third as likely as those in the national workforce to be victims of homicide at work. But it also reported that violence throughout the American workplace is unacceptably high with, last year, one in 20 workers physically assaulted, one in six sexually harassed and one in three verbally abused.

The study also conducted a meticulous examination of the 29 incidents of workplace homicide involving postal workers as either victims or perpetrators from 1986 to 1999. Not surprisingly, they

grim statistics

found that 14 of the 15 postal perpetrators had troubled histories of violence, mental illness, substance abuse and/or criminal convictions. Clearly a minimum of a third of those responsible for subsequent workplace violence had exhibited behaviour prior to employment that should have excluded them from being hired. And most perpetrators studied (20 out of 34) either had a known history of substance abuse or were known to be under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs at the time of the homicide. Unfortunately, either comprehensive reference-checking had not been carried out or previous employers had refrained from giving negative references.

This is vital information, given the difficulty of anticipating workplace violence. Indeed the best predictor may not be current on the job conduct but instead past conduct. Comprehensive reference-checking and drug testing to ensure conduct is identified prior to employment could, therefore, be critical to the reduction and prevention of such incidents. However, this is not to suggest a candidate who may have been involved in some type of workplace violence must automatically be excluded from future employment consideration. In fact direct confrontation and acknowledgement of such prior conduct, evidence of corrective action and professional assistance, may assist in gaining future employment.

Other preventative measures include a 'zero tolerance' policy on workplace violence supported by appropriate training of all employees, not just supervisors and union officials. This should include the requirement that employees promptly report to an appropriate management representative any violation of the policy or any unusual behaviour or other circumstances that could lead to workplace violence. This might include bizarre behaviour, mood swings, threats, progressive misconduct or other unstable actions. Such a policy should also explicitly prohibit weapons of any type at work.

Recognising that family members or even complete strangers commit many instances of workplace violence, special care must be taken to restrict access to the workplace to those authorised to be there.

It is also essential to heed early warning signals, such as lateness, absenteeism, argumentative or abrupt behaviour, and to ensure that a consistent procedure is available for the assessment of such threats. One invaluable device is the Employee Assistance Programme, a confidential professional service that can prove very helpful to a troubled employee at a stressful or otherwise critical time.

Difficult times and circumstances, such as plant closures, mass layoffs or disciplinary action, especially termination, may well contribute to an employee already 'on the edge' finally losing control. Here, again, training of supervisors and union officials can play an important role.

Some also consider the availability of an alternative dispute resolution procedure may be useful to whatever extent it assures employees, including the one with the hidden potential for violence, that they will have an orderly and balanced appeal mechanism for their concerns.

The employer's first obligation to an employee is to provide a safe workplace. If a violent incident does occur, the HR professional needs to know how to deal with the terrible tragedy and disruption it brings both to the workplace and the lives of workers and their families.

But maintaining the proper perspective is also important. Over a similar period, the city of Washington, DC experienced approximately 78 homicides per 100,000 people, whereas the US Postal Service experienced only 0.63 (less than one) deaths per 100,000 workers. In other words, an employee at work is safer than in his or her own general community. ○

WorldLink would welcome views, comments and contributions from all round the world on the theme of managing workplace violence – the sectors in which it most frequently occurs and readers' experience of how to handle it, particularly in respect of overseas employees and international policies. Experience relating to kidnapping and terrorism where it affects expatriate employees would also be of interest.

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Fax +613 9696 4532
Website: www.convention2001.ahri.com.au

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Tel: +703 683 8196
Fax: +703 683 1523
Email: intldel@astd.org

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Email: adoarh@codetel.net.do

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Wiesbaden, Germany
DGFP National Congress
Contact: Ute Graf
Tel: +49 211 5978 150
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Email: graf@dgfp..de

June 12–14, 2001
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OHE National Conference
Contact: Hungarian Association for HRM
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Fax: +36 1 361 4656
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Asia Pacific HR Conference
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Mexico City, Mexico
AMEDIRH Annual Congress
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