



## HRD makes it to ILO agenda

A NEW international labour standard on human resources development was discussed for the first time at the International Labour Organisation (ILO)'s 91st annual conference held in Geneva, Switzerland in June.

This new instrument is expected to replace ILO Recommendation no 150 on HRD, which was adopted in 1975.

In its conclusions on the contents of a future Recommendation, the Conference Committee on Human Resources Development, of which WFPMA President Carlos Aldao Zapiola is a member, recognised HRD as a key component of the response needed to facilitate lifelong learning and employability.

The gathering of the ILO's 176 member-States also reached an unprecedented agreement on a global strategy to fight occupational injuries and illnesses that

kill some 2 million workers a year. Of these, 354,000 are due to fatal accidents. But in addition some 270 million workers are affected by occupational accidents and 160 million by occupational diseases every year.

The strategy would be implemented in two ways – by introducing a “preventative safety and health culture” and also by means of a promotional instrument designed to help member States establish and implement national occupational health and safety programmes in close collaboration with employers and workers. Work on such an instrument could start in 2005.

Other key discussions at the conference covered ways of reducing poverty, including new funds for skills development and promoting ‘decent work’, and security from terrorism for

the world's 1.2million seafarers, which resulted in a new Convention to establish a more rigorous identity regime.

In addition the ILO was requested to prepare a Recommendation on the employment relationship, which would focus on appropriate protection for ‘disguised’ employees (workers whose employment status is disguised or hidden). The agreed text promotes flexibility “to take account of different economic, social, legal and IR traditions” and underlines the “dynamic” character of the employment relationship, which must adapt constantly to new labour market challenges.

Finally, during a special sitting, delegates held an in-depth discussion on ways to overcome discrimination at work, which highlighted the importance of legal underpinnings.

● [www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org)



**Miguelina Veras de Vargas, President of ADOARH, and FIDAP President Eladio Uribe who hosted and addressed the 18th InterAmerican Congress held in the Dominican Republic in May. The FIDAP Board elected Cassio Mattos of Brazil as the next FIDAP President; he will take over in November and Brazil will host the 2004 WFPMA World Congress.**

## Europe's new president

FILIPPO ABRAMO, Director of Human Resources for Banco di Sardegna, is the new President of the European Association of Personnel Management.

Elected at the EAPM Congress in Rome last month, he took over from Christoph Schaub of Switzerland with immediate effect. The new Vice-President is the Netherlands' Pieter Haen.

At the same time the association secretariat moved from the UK's CIPD to Germany's DGFP, with WFPMA Board member Hans Bohm succeeding Geoff Armstrong as EAPM Secretary General.



Armstrong, who is currently WFPMA Secretary General, was elected as the EAPM's nomination to succeed Carlos Aldao Zapiola as World Federation President after next

year's World Congress in Brazil.

Filippo Abramo, who has a law degree and an MBA, has worked in distribution and retail, pharmaceuticals and chemicals and consultancy.

He is currently Deputy Vice President of the AIDP, the Italian association, and for five years has edited their magazine *Direzione del Personale*; he is also President of the Sardinia Regional Group.

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MAGAZINE OF THE  
World Federation of  
Personnel Management  
Associations

**WorldLink**

welcomes news stories, announcements of events and ideas for articles. These should be accompanied by a telephone number and email address where possible. Please send items to Susanne Lawrence Editor, Worldlink PPL, 17 Manchester Street London W1U 4DH, England Tel: 020 7487 4284 Fax: 020 7563 9303 Email: susanne.lawrence@ppltd.co.uk

**Next issue**

The next issue of WorldLink will be published in October 2003. Please submit contributions by 26 August 2003.

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Designed and printed by Centurion Press Ltd ISSN 1560-2737

# Regional or transnational?

## How multinationals integrate the HR practices of their Chinese affiliates

BY WERNER H BRAUN, PAUL R SPARROW, RANDALL S SCHULER

With average growth of 9 per cent a year over the last decade, the People's Republic of China (PRC) is one of the world's fastest growing economies, not least as a result of the opening up of the country to foreign direct investment. Not surprisingly, therefore, for many multinationals (MNEs) investing in the PRC is a key aspect of their global strategy, and it follows that managing multiple affiliates there, then controlling and integrating them into the rest of the organisation has become a prime objective.

Despite the challenges inherent in the PRC's institutional and cultural idiosyncracies, many MNEs are increasingly focusing on integrating the HRM system of their PRC affiliates into the wider MNE network.

This has also been influenced by the fact that managerial talent is one of the scarcest resources within the PRC, which means that introducing world-class HR practices to their affiliates that will attract and retain the best managers there becomes a core task for MNEs.

Previous research has shown that MNEs utilise their regional headquarters (RHQs) or newly established PRC holding companies to drive forward this integration process. But we do not know whether this occurs mostly on a regional level, whether it involves predominantly the introduction of parent company HR practices, or whether companies actually introduce a mix of locally and regional adjusted worldwide practices. Are any firms actually pursuing a 'transnational' HRM strategy?

**Manufacturing study**

To answer these questions, we looked at 64 large-scale MNEs from Western Europe (33) and the USA (31) between January and September 2001. The study focused on manufacturing industries and those companies with an Asia Pacific RHQ and/or a PRC holding company, and we examined HR practices as applied to PRC managers working in these MNEs.

A questionnaire measured the degree to which the HRM functional areas of selection and recruitment, training and development, financial bonus systems and performance appraisal systems were similar to those of the MNE's parent company, their operations in the Asia Pacific region, other local PRC manufacturing companies and PRC-based

affiliates of other multinationals. A range of factors explaining variation in HRM practice integration was measured, and the survey was supplemented by in-depth interviews to provide insight into the process of HR practice integration.

Most MNEs participating in the study are strategic investors in the PRC with over 1,000 employees there. Together they represent more than 500 PRC affiliates and have an average of 7.8 operations per company. In the majority of cases RHQs and PRC holding companies have functional HR responsibility over PRC affiliates – in itself an indication of the importance MNEs give today to HRM in supporting the process of integrating PRC affiliates into the MNE network.

The core research questions were:

- Do the firms introduce predominantly parent company, regional or host country practices for their PRC affiliates?
- Which functional areas of HRM do firms focus on in this integration process?
- Are there variations between different types of firms (clusters) and how can these variations be explained?

In their 'exploratory' investment phase, MNEs did not see the HR function as critical to the success of established affiliates. Faced with strong institutional involvement, they typically left the function to the Chinese partner which in turn was localised. This has changed quite dramatically. Today foreign partners have a heightened interest in controlling the HR function.

None of the companies in the sample followed a 'purely' parent company-driven, regional or local HR strategy. All companies integrate at least one HRM functional area of their PRC affiliates into the wider MNE network. This chosen area of integration then shows similarities to practices of the parent company, regional operations and in the majority of cases also to PRC-based affiliates of other MNE companies. Similarities to local PRC manufacturing companies were less pronounced.

What appears to be happening is that the HRM practice integration of PRC affiliates occurs through the development of a 'hybrid' HR system, drawing from 'best' practices of the parent, the region and other MNE companies based within the host country. From our findings, the majority of firms show an element of 'transnational' or 'global' HRM

practice implementation. Firms simultaneously utilise both sources from their worldwide network as well as host country-based external sources to master the HRM integration process. Locally, they are more inclined to take the affiliate practices of other MNEs as a benchmark, supported by the development of strong professional HR networks among MNEs.

**Appraisal is key**

Despite this widespread element of 'transnational' or 'global' HRM practice implementation, companies varied significantly in the extent of specific HRM functional areas that they integrated. The most popular functional area to integrate is the performance appraisal system. Given the core role such systems play in promoting shared values and the development of a corporate culture bridging geographically dispersed operations, this reflects the desire of MNEs to increasingly integrate their PRC affiliates into the rest of the organisation.

There were, however, several different 'types' of approaches. The majority of firms were narrow in the choice of the HR functional areas they integrated, focusing only on their performance management ie

their appraisal systems and/or financial bonus systems (44 firms), or solely on training and development (7 firms).

Yet one cluster of 13 firms was significantly different from the others. They integrated HRM areas linked both to performance management and to input-related HR activities, such as selection and recruitment, as well as training and development. The result was a broad HRM practice integration for their PRC affiliates which could potentially allow them to develop a competitive advantage over their 'narrow integration' competitors.

So what are the characteristics of the firms adopting a broad HRM practice integration? Two of the most powerful predictors explaining membership in this cluster are:

- The length of time regional corporate centres with functional PRC responsibility have been established; and
- The attitude of top management at corporate headquarters regarding transfer of HR practices across national borders (eg on an Asia Pacific basis).

Firms showing a broad HRM practice integration had established their regional corporate centres more than 10 years ago.

Firms with a narrow integration had established these units more recently. Such an association appears logical if one considers that the development of local and regional competencies supporting a 'transnational' or 'global' implementation process is rather time consuming. This could take the form of developing and socialising local and regional HR managers into the company as a whole, and developing an insider position within local and regional professional HR networks.

Importantly, regional corporate centres do not appear to be temporary solutions for firms showing this broad level of HRM practice integration. Our findings suggest that the competencies developed over time at these regional corporate centres are valuable to further the integration process. Rather than being utilised simply to advance regional strategies, regional corporate centres for these firms appear to function as implementation instruments and incubators for 'transnational' HR strategies.

Firms in the cluster showing a broad HRM practice integration also differed from the other firms in that top management at corporate headquarters showed a more favourable attitude towards the transfer of HR practices across national borders. This finding shows that the pursuit of 'transnational' or 'global' HRM strategies is strongly dependent on top management viewing HR competencies on a global level as a source of possible competitive advantage. Producing congruence between an MNE's strategic HR objectives and the attitudes at top management level should be a top priority for MNEs wishing to successfully achieve a broad HRM practice integration for their operations in the PRC and possibly elsewhere in the world. ○

*Werner H. Braun is a research associate and Paul R. Sparrow is Ford Professor of International Human Resource Management, both at Manchester Business School in the UK. Randall S. Schuler is Professor for Human Resource Strategy at the School of Management and Labor Relations, Rutgers University, New Jersey, USA*

### Participating companies

|                   |                   |                             |                     |
|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| 3M                | Ciba Specialty    | Glaxo Wellcome <sup>2</sup> | Owens Corning       |
| AHP/ Wyeth        | Colgate Palmolive | Henkel                      | Phillips            |
| Air Liquide       | Compaq            | Aventis                     | Phillips Petrol     |
| Alstom            | Cummins           | IBM                         | Praxair             |
| Astra Zeneca      | DaimlerChrysler   | ICI                         | Procter & Gamble    |
| AT & T            | Degussa           | Johnson & Johnson           | Roche               |
| Avery Dennison    | Dresser Rand      | Lucent                      | Rockwell Automation |
| BASF              | DuPont            | Mannesmann <sup>1</sup>     | Saint-Gobain        |
| Bayer             | Eastman Kodak     | Merck                       | Schindler           |
| Bechtel           | Eaton             | Monsanto                    | Shell Royal Dutch   |
| BMS               | Elf Aquitaine     | Motorola                    | Siemens             |
| BOC Edwards       | Eli Lilly         | Nestlé                      | SKF                 |
| Bosch             | Emerson           | Nokia                       | Texas Instruments   |
| BP (Chemicals)    | Ericsson          | Norsk Hydro                 | Unilever            |
| BP (Oil)          | General Motors    | Nortelnetworks              | VW                  |
| Cadbury Schweppes | Gillette          | Novartis                    | Xerox               |

<sup>1</sup> Since the research has been carried out Mannesmann has been taken over by Vodafone  
<sup>2</sup> Glaxo Wellcome has merged with Smithkline Beecham to form Glaxo Smithkline

# Developing managers in Europe: linking effort to performance

Why is it that, for all the talk, scant attention is given to management development by most organisations most of the time? Is it possible to demonstrate a connection between management development policies and practices and operational performance? If so, how – what are the links in the chain? Chris Mabey reports some early findings from a major European study of management development which attempts to answer these questions

How healthy is management development in Europe? One test is to ask how much is going on. Overall, an average of 9.1 days training per manager a year is reported by HRD managers, not inconsistent with 8.7 days reported by line managers, and a distinct improvement on the 5.3 days a year published in 1992. The average spend on management development is 205 euros a day, with a wide variation between 129 euros in Spain and 520 euros in Germany.

These are fairly blunt measures. How well crafted is the story behind these headlines?

Most organisations claim to have a specific budget for general staff training, the exceptions being Denmark where this true for only half the companies and Spain where the figure is only 25 per cent. It is not surprising to find over 90 per cent of French organisations with a training budget because the French government requires companies to spend a specified percentage (around 2 per cent) of the annual payroll on training. The HRD managers in less than half the organisations claim to have a management development policy statement, although the

proportion increases to two thirds for those located in Norway. These percentages have not changed markedly (by more than 9 per cent) since 1992, except for a sharp increase in the United Kingdom (UK) and a slight drop in France.

How does management development compare to other factors in creating management capability? Or, in short, what makes an effective manager?

Most important for all countries except Germany is the innate factor of inherent ability and personality. Next most influential is in-company training and job experience. Less important are management qualifications – vocational degrees and external education gained after joining the organisation, although it should be noted that in the UK (where we have comparable data since 1986) external qualifications, such as an MBA, have steadily gained ground in the last decade.

It seems the belief that managers and leaders are 'born not made' continues to prevail in most of Europe, and this is especially pronounced in Norway and Denmark.

## What triggers and what hinders management development?

Nearly a quarter of firms cite external changes, whether driven by competitor activity, government regulation, mergers or globalisation strategy, as the biggest stimulus to investing in management development. Next comes business needs, like the need to improve flexibility, retain staff and grow skills. This is followed by 16 per cent who refer to HR policies and goals as the trigger for improving management capability in their organisations. Only after this are more short-term, demand-led issues like managers pushing for promotion, the need to 'cover' new responsibilities and changes in technology mentioned.

Interestingly, this ranking of triggers by HRD managers was mirrored by line managers also across the seven countries.

When asked to rate the factors which inhibit management development in their organisation, it is encouraging to note that development is constrained less by the lack of

support from the senior team and the lack of enthusiasm from managers themselves and more by costs and practical difficulties of covering for staff. This is a consistent picture for all countries, except Spain. The situation is particularly difficult in Spain where both logistics and attitudes appear to be weighing heavily against investment in management development activities.

## Which policies are favoured?

A well-established management development practice is to provide fast-track development for a designated cohort of managers, sometimes referred to as high-flyers. Such programmes are definitely favoured in France, Germany and Norway, where more than two thirds of organisations adopt fast-tracking. Comparisons with figures reported in 1992 show a steep increase in the use of intensive development for high-potential managers in France, the UK and Germany. Around half or more organisations in all countries report that they plan managers' careers, with Danish and German companies taking this more seriously than others.

Potentially, appraisal discussions constitute an important element of the management development cycle, both in terms of setting and reviewing developmental actions. Using responses from both HRD and line managers, we find that across Europe, 45 per cent of firms have appraisals for all managers, 20 per cent for some managers and 35 per cent use no appraisal systems at all. But these figures mask some home truths. While 82 per cent of UK firms use appraisals for managers, only 42 per cent report career planning. In contrast, 59 per cent of Spanish firms do not use appraisals, yet 60 per cent report planned careers. It seems that formal HR systems alone do not tell the whole story. When it comes to evaluating their management development activities, 41 per cent of HRD managers and 37 per cent of line managers maintain that their organisation makes some systematic attempt, and this is done via a wide variety of means including audits of quality, performance, innovation and customer satisfaction.

## Proactive ethos?

So far we have considered the existence of management development policies and the extent of practices associated with these policies. While these measures are suggestive of the importance placed on management development by a given organisation, they say little about the quality of these processes, the degree to which they mutually reinforce each other and the extent to which they support wider business objectives. A brochure publicising the policy may remain unopened or ignored. Training needs may be discussed at appraisals but remain unmonitored. At best the practices described above may combine to deliver thoughtful and effective training for managers; at worst they can come to be seen as empty rhetoric and engender cynicism.

In order to understand an organisation's real attitudes towards management development, we need to know more about its underlying rationale and its strategic intent. Three indices from the interview data were created to achieve this. The first two, reported by the HRD managers, indicated strategic fit (an active link between HR and business strategies) and a proactive management development ethos (the use of a skills/competency framework, taking responsibility for managers' development over the long term development of managers and an emphasis on developing individual potential). The third, derived from line managers, measured the degree to which they felt the organisation was delivering on its promises regarding management development. We called this 'perceived congruence'.

The differences in country scores on these three dimensions are not dramatic. In all countries, despite the fact that HRD managers report a strong strategic focus, this is not usually matched by a proactive ethos, nor perceived congruence as reported by line managers. We might therefore conclude that there is a discernible gap between the rhetoric and the reality. Organisations say that they regard their managers as a valued asset to be cultivated,

but demonstrating this by linking development to business strategy and taking responsibility for this over the longer term is still lagging behind intent.

There is some good news, however. For the 700 firms we took a self-report measure of organisational performance (aggregated from the HRD and line manager in each firm), including such things as the quality of products and services, the ability to attract and retain essential staff and the quality of relationships in the firm – all as compared against others in their sector. For a sub sample of 180 firms, we were able to use the Amadeus database to compare this against an objective measure of financial performance. The two measures correlated statistically, thus validating our self-report index.

We were now able to assess whether management development had an impact on performance.

The outcome is both remarkable and reassuring. Best practices alone have no effect. However, organisations where HR development managers report strategic fit and a proactive ethos, and where line managers perceive there to be congruence between the rhetoric and the reality of management development, are also those firms that report superior performance.

## Vital ingredients

It seems that investing in management development can make a tangible difference, irrespective of country, sector or company size. For this to happen, it is not enough to have the 'best practices' in place. Nor indeed does the amount and variety of management training activity make the difference. These are necessary but not sufficient. Two other ingredients are necessary.

The first is for the top team to take a definite and sustained commitment towards, and a proactive stance on, the development of their management capability over the longer term. The second is that this is noticed by those managers on the receiving end of management development initiatives and regarded by them as genuine. Priorities are created, promises fulfilled, consistency over time is observed and 'the talk is walked'. ○

Chris Mabey is Reader in Organisational Psychology at Birkbeck College, University of London, UK

## THE STUDY

The research project, designed to investigate management training policies and practices, is being led by Birkbeck College, University of London with a team of partners in seven European countries (Norway, Denmark, Germany, France, Romania, Spain and the UK). It is being carried out with the support of the European Commission, the Leonardo da Vinci CVTS Programme and the DTI. The reported results are based on 1400 telephone interviews with HRD and line managers in 700 private sector firms. All organisations employing 20 or more employees are represented, across three sectors: manufacturing, transport and distribution and services. Currently 70 case studies are being carried out, 10 in each country, to deepen understanding of management training and development processes.

For further information contact the project leader Dr Chris Mabey on [c.mabey@bbk.ac.uk](mailto:c.mabey@bbk.ac.uk); +44 (0) 20 7631 6753

# Checking out flexible working

BY SAMANTHA LYNCH AND ROBIN PRICE

A recent comparative study of flexible working in two large grocery retailers – one in the UK and the other in Australia – sheds some interesting light on similarities and differences even among highly developed countries across the world and points to greater convergence in practice in the near future

Since the 1980s there has been a growth in all forms of flexible employment internationally, most notably in the retail industry. UK retailing has seen a shift from a predominantly full-time workforce to large numbers of part-time workers, with 'new' flexible – including zero hour and minimum hour – contracts, and in Australia there has been a large increase in the use of part-time and casual employment contracts.

A recent cross-country study that looked at food retailing in France, Germany the UK and Japan\* found a trend across all four countries towards an increase in part-time employment, both permanent and casual.

However, the UK and Australian retail grocery markets are broadly similar in terms of structure and competition levels, and in both countries long opening hours, policies of increased customer service and lower costs, and employment strategies involving extensive use of flexible workers are common. So it made sense to compare numerical flexibility practices in these two countries.

For the purposes of anonymity, we have called the UK firm Groceryco and the Australian one Foodco. Each organisation employed over 100,000 employees, of whom respectively 77 per cent and 70 per cent worked part-time. Ten per cent of Groceryco's total workforce were employed on a temporary basis – generally new staff on probationary contracts. Approximately 26 per cent of the part-time workers at Foodco had permanent part-time contracts, while 46 per cent were employed on a casual or temporary basis.

\*Flexible working in food retailing' by C. Baret, S. Lehdorff and L. Sparks (eds), Routledge, 2000

To achieve numerical flexibility Groceryco used a variety of employment contracts – permanent, temporary, full-time, part-time and minimum hours – but relied heavily on part-time employees. Foodco used full-time, permanent part-time and casual employees, the latter providing the flexibility to deal with fluctuations in trade. Foodco set targets for the proportion of hours performed by different categories of labour, so, while casual workers comprised up to half the workforce in some stores, they accounted for less than 25 per cent of total labour hours in the stores studied. This was to achieve a balance between flexibility and the ability to recruit and retain a high standard of employee. Groceryco had no such policy, but senior HR managers at head office were keen to increase the proportion of full-time and longer hours part-time employees to resource a strategy of quality customer service provision.

## Collective agreement

The deployment of 'flexible' contracts in the two organisations was at variance in a variety of ways. Employment at Foodco was regulated by a collective agreement negotiated with the shop assistants union. This established the number of weekly hours worked by permanent part-timers to fixed shifts totalling between 12 and 36 hours a week, but placed no constraints on the use of casual labour.

Part-time staff rarely worked beyond their contracted hours, whereas casual workers had no contracted hours and could be called in or sent home at the employer's discretion.

Hence, casual workers provided the numerical flexibility to cover employee absences and any unforeseen fluctuations in trade.

This was in contrast to Groceryco where part-timers' weekly hours were not set by collective agreement. Weekly shift patterns were relatively consistent, although there were often requests to work beyond contracted hours to cover trading peaks and employee absence. While it was at the employee's discretion whether to work these additional hours, there was often pressure from store level managers whose view of employment was very much controlled by a cost approach.

In both organisations part-timers were paid at the same hourly rate as full-time employees, and entitled to the same employee benefits, on a pro rata basis.

## Training and promotion

The jobs carried out by part-timers in the two case study organisations differed in terms of functions and responsibilities. At Foodco, the roles performed by permanent part-timers included ordering, receiving and storing stock, refilling shelves and registering sales, as well as relieving department managers and other full-time staff in their absence. Due to the operation of a strong internal labour market, permanent part-time employees at Foodco were regularly trained with a view to promotion and often deputised for managers.

In contrast, part-time employees at Groceryco were generally confined to low skilled, low paid, 'peripheral' work

*"Part-timers are not developing into section managers because they are not committed enough. They are less trustworthy – they have less accountability as they are on the tills for shorter periods of time and there are more of them so they can easily blame the previous operator for any discrepancies."*

Senior Store Manager, Groceryco (UK)

within the stores, limited to shelf-filling and serving customers. They were also excluded from management positions, which were almost universally full-time. The full-timers tended to fill positions regarded as 'skilled' with a degree of responsibility and opportunity of advancement.

Such practice is common in the UK retail industry where part-time work is predominantly characterised by low pay, few opportunities for training and promotion and low levels of occupational skill.

Divergence in the labour resourcing practices of the two organisations through their use of more acute forms of flexible employment contracts was also noted. Casual employment is common within Australian service industries, but the retail sector has the highest incidence of 'casual' or temporary employment of any industry, with 46 per cent of all workers employed on a casual basis.

Within retailing these employees are typified as having temporary contracts with no guaranteed daily or weekly hours, no entitlement to sick or annual leave, and are often paid an hourly penalty loading of around 20-23 per cent in lieu of these benefits.

Forty four per cent of Foodco's workforce was employed on casual contracts, generally working in departments that were dependent on face to face customer service, and in routine jobs requiring only basic training and skills.

## Short notice

Sophisticated technology was used to determine the requirements for these employees, who were often called in at late notice each day to work the minimum three-hour shift permitted under the collective agreement. This was particularly apparent for shelf-filling duties where 'just-in-time' stock management had created a demand for 'just-in-time' employee resourcing. Additionally, casual workers have no employment protection until realising 12 months service and so, through employing workers as 'casuals', Foodco was able to assess employee performance before committing to a permanent contract.

Groceryco used the same process of initially employing staff on temporary contracts for a probationary period. However, these spells generally lasted only three months and all other terms and conditions remained indistinguishable from those of permanent employees.

While Groceryco did try to increase the employment of full-timers and longer hour part-timers, the company was under the same competitive and cost pressures as Foodco. Consequently, a minimum hours contract was developed that guaranteed employees between 10 and 16 core and regular working hours each week but required them to be available to work up to 31 hours, including the 'high priority'

*"You've got a wage budget for the cost of doing business, and the schoolkids want to work at night and weekends and that's where you get your cheaper labour component, so you do it. Obviously you get a certain percentage of those who go on in their career anyway, so as a development exercise it's a good thing... It's about trying to attract people to the job and different hours attract different types of people."*

HR Manager, Foodco (Australia)

hours such as weekends. Other terms and conditions included three-hour minimum shift periods, 24 hours notice for working additional shifts, 12-hour rests between shifts, sick pay when unable to work a core shift and holiday entitlement based on total hours worked.

This move towards minimum hour contracts may suggest that UK retailers will eventually assume the same employment flexibility practices that Australian retailers currently deploy.

The research demonstrates how retailers in the UK and Australia operate in similar environments, but currently deploy different approaches to resource their labour requirements. Part-timers at Groceryco were confined to certain occupational groups, usually directly responsive to customer demands, within the lowest grades of the store. Conversely, part-timers on permanent employment contracts at Foodco were employed in roles of

greater skill and responsibility. It became apparent that, in contrast to Groceryco, part-time workers at Foodco had employment characteristics more aligned to the core workforce, and it was the casual workers who were confined to the peripheral workforce. The operation of a stronger internal market at Foodco, whereby part-timers were offered opportunities for progression and development, was quite the reverse to the practices at Groceryco where part-timers had very limited opportunities for advancement.

In Australia, where there are no regulatory constraints on the use of casual employment, which is an accepted employee resourcing strategy, Foodco could readily deploy just-in-

time labour resourcing, and indeed was using more acute forms of numerical flexibility to achieve its organisational strategy of improved customer service and cost savings. However, there was evidence of Groceryco shifting towards increased levels of numerical flexibility through minimum hour contracts, despite a concurrent strategy to employ greater numbers of full-time and longer hour part-time employees.

These results do suggest a convergence of practice in the near future. ○

*Samantha Lynch is a lecturer in HRM and industrial relations at the University of Kent in the UK and Robin Price an associate lecturer at Griffith University, Queensland, Australia. Their article is based on a paper they gave at the recent International Employment Relations Association conference at the University of Greenwich, London, UK*

## THE WORLDLINK HR CALENDAR

**August 3-5, 2003**

Sun City, South Africa

**47th Annual IPM Convention**

Tel: +27 11 785 6803  
 Fax: +27 11 803 5318  
 Email: karmen@ipm.co.za

**August 12-15, 2003**

Sao Paulo, Brazil

**ABRH 29th National Conference**

Tel: +55 11 3256 0455  
 Fax: +55 11 3214 0858  
 Email: abrh@abrhacional.org.br

**August 22-25, 2003**

Santiago, Chile

**CERH National HR Conference**

Tel: +56 2 33 97 570/4  
 Fax: +56 2 33 97 5888  
 Email: surbina@laaraucana.cl

**September 4-6, 2003**

Bucaramanga (Santander), Colombia

**ACRIP 14th National HR Congress**

Tel: +57 1 545 9466  
 Fax: +57 1 210 0961  
 Email: acrip@col.net.co

**September 24-26, 2003**

Wellington, New Zealand

**HRINZ Annual Conference and Expo**

Tel: +64 4 499 2966  
 Fax: +64 4 499 2965  
 Email: hrinz@hrinz.org.nz

**October 2-4, 2003**

Córdoba, Spain

**AEDIPE 38th Annual Conference**

Tel: +34 91 420 0612  
 Fax: +34 91 420 0894  
 Email: aedipe@aedipe.es

**October 5-6, 2003**

Bratislava, Slovak Republic

**6th Slovak National HR conference**

Tel: +421 44 55 10 104  
 Fax: +421 44 55 26 034  
 Email: jan.podstrelenec@swedwood.sk

**October 8-11, 2003**

Cebu City, Philippines

**PMAP 40th National Conference**

Tel: +632 726 1532  
 Fax: +632 726 1530  
 Email: pmap@pmap.org.ph

**October 14-15, 2003**

Melbourne, Australia

**AHRI Learning/Technology Conference**

Tel: +613 9918 9200  
 Fax: +613 9918 9201  
 Email: enquiries@ahri.com.au

**October 22-24, 2003**

Harrogate, England

**CIPD 56th National Conference**

Tel: +44 20 8263 3434  
 Fax: +44 20 8263 3223  
 Email: conf@cipd.co.uk

**October 23, 2003**

Athens, Greece

**SSDP Annual Conference**

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