



International benefits policies yet to keep pace with priorities, survey shows

INTERNATIONAL assignments continue to be valued by companies as they help equip employees with the leadership skills to launch new ventures and manage projects aboard, but the number of short-term assignments is growing and long-term ones are being reduced as firms seek to preserve operational flexibility, according to a new survey by employee benefits providers Mercer.

Participants in the survey, which covered 230 multinationals employing more than 50,000 globally mobile employees in North and Latin America, Europe, the Middle East and Africa and the Asia Pacific region, almost all agreed that addressing benefits issues for these people was a medium or top priority, and yet a quarter of those surveyed admitted they did not have a benefits policy specifically for globally mobile employees.

Moreover, almost 10 per cent of globally mobile employees had expressed dissatisfaction with their benefit package while on assignment.

“Keeping approaches for expatriates and third country nationals fair and consistent globally is an extremely complex and challenging undertaking,” said Mercer Principal Peter Blake, “particularly as the ‘one size fits all’ approach no longer satisfies employees. Differentiating benefits by region or level of employee, for example, is becoming increasingly necessary but can further complicate the process,” he added.

Pension provisions

According to the survey, defined benefit (DB) pension provision for globally mobile employees will continue to decline. The research found that two-thirds of companies with international pension plans now use defined contribution (DC) arrangements and one in 10 organisations offering a DB plan aims to close it in favour of a DC scheme in the near future, although almost all defined benefit plans that remain are in fact open to new entrants.

The survey found that 71 per cent of companies with European

headquarters offer DC arrangements for their globally mobile employees compared with just 50 per cent in North America. Also average pension contributions by European employers tend to be greater, at 8 per cent, compared with 6 per cent in North American organisations.

Of the companies with plans to change their expatriate benefit programmes for such employees, 46 per cent said they intend to outsource the administration. Just over a third of respondents (39 per cent) said they aimed to globalise their approach to benefits provision.

US v Europe

Reflecting practices in their home countries, North American companies typically provide a lower level of benefits than European organisations, though employees of American multinationals can access additional benefits if they pay for them. For example, while most European multinationals provide international medical plans with no restrictions on the choice of

provider and family coverage, employees of US companies are expected to contribute towards the cost of treatment.

A significant number of medical plans do not cover repatriation and evacuation (28 per cent) or pre-existing medical conditions (17 per cent).

The most common level of death benefit among participants is two-and-a-half times salary in North American organisations compared with three times salary in European and other multinationals. The long-term disability benefit provided by most multinationals is 70 per cent of salary. Almost all companies provide emergency assistance, accidental death and dismemberment and business travel accident cover.

● Expatriate and Third-Country Nationals Benefits Survey 2005/6 is available price US\$1080 from www.mercerhr.com

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Former Mexican minister to be next OECD Secretary-General

ÁNGEL GURRÍA, who has been both Foreign Minister and subsequently Finance Minister of Mexico, has been appointed Secretary-General of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) from June 1, 2006, in succession to Donald J. Johnston, who is retiring.

Mr. Gurría, who is 55, was one of six candidates for the post. An economist with a distinguished career in public service, he served

as Mexico’s Minister of Foreign Affairs from December 1994 to January 1998 and as Minister of Finance and Public Credit from January 1998 to December 2000. He currently acts as adviser or board member for a number of private companies, multilateral institutions and non-profit associations focusing on development, international finance and globalisation.

He was a member of the team that negotiated Mexico’s admission to the OECD in 1994 and

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Photo: OECD



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WorldLink

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Next issue

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The pursuit of happiness Bhutan-style

'Happiness', a word hitherto associated with Holy Grails and matters spiritual, appears to be entering the world of work, as recent research claims productivity and creativity come from happiness – rather than, or at least as well as, the other way round. The small Buddhist kingdom of Bhutan has for some years been using measures of happiness in preference to GNP to guide economic and public policy and growing interest in that approach has led to a worldwide Gross International Happiness Network. Home Affairs

Minister Lyonpo Jigmi Thinley, pictured left, will be sharing his country's experience as one of the keynote speakers at the forthcoming World HR Congress in Singapore in May



The Honourable Lyonpo Jigmi Y Thinley, Bhutan's Minister for Home Affairs and a keynote speaker at the World HR Congress in Singapore in May, has

been touring the world speaking about his country's 'Gross National Happiness' philosophy for some years now. However the Singapore Human Resources Institute's invitation could not have been better timed, as recent research from California could well move the subject of 'happiness' from the realms of what some would regard as the 'touchy-feely' fringe to the much more mainstream.

The research, published in the *Psychological Bulletin* last month,* showed that happiness is a more effective key to success than working hard.

It would appear that cheerful people are more likely to try new things and challenge themselves, which reinforces positive emotion and leads to success in work, good relationships and health.

Undertaken by a team from the University of California Riverside, led by Professor Sonja Lyubomirsky, the work provides strong evidence that happiness leads people to be more productive at work, as well as to be more sociable and more generous, to make more money and indeed to have stronger immune systems.

The findings thus suggest that happiness is not a 'feelgood' luxury, but is essential to people's well-being. Moreover, it can extend across an entire nation, with people in 'happy' nations being more likely to have pro-democratic attitudes and a keenness to help others.

The happiest people in the world are reputed to be the Bhutanese, whose leader for the last

► OECD continued from page 1

oversaw the early years of membership. In 1999, he was responsible for the invitation to a number of developing countries to participate for the first time at the Organisation's annual Ministerial Council Meeting where they could discuss relevant policy issues with OECD countries.

As Secretary-General he will oversee the work of the OECD's Secretariat, whose staff of 2,000 economists, lawyers and others assist governments in tracking and addressing issues relating to national economies and the global economic environment.

The Secretary-General also chairs the OECD's decision-making Council, providing the link between national delegations and the Secretariat.

Donald Johnston, a former Canadian government minister, announced last year that he would retire in May 2006, after 10 years in the post. During his tenure, the OECD enlarged its membership to include new members in Europe and Asia and engaged in a programme of reform, streamlining its management systems and extending the scope of its work in areas such as education, health policy and taxation.

One of the principal tasks facing Mr. Gurría will be to lead the Organisation as it strengthens its activities against a background of increased economic interdependence both among OECD countries and between OECD and non-OECD countries.

● For further information, see www.oecd.org

30-plus years, King Jigme Singye Wanchuck, is attributed as the source of the notion that Gross National Happiness (GNH) is more important than Gross National (or Domestic) Product (GNP/GDP).

GNH is rooted in the Buddhist belief that the ultimate purpose of life is inner happiness, and that quality of life is not dependent on material production and consumption, but on values such as compassion and sharing, the diminution of great disparities of income across segments of society, unemployment and rampant urbanisation.

Unique culture

Ascending the throne of this small Buddhist kingdom located in the Himalayas between India and Tibet and hitherto isolated from the rest of the world, King Jigme Singye Wanchuck was concerned about the effects of globalisation and conventional western development on his country's unique culture and wanted to find a way to protect it. Not least he thought that, if he could convert Bhutan's social and cultural values into quantifiable terms, the wider world might be able to understand and respect them.

In 1998 Minister Lyonpo Jigmi Thinley came up with four 'pillars of happiness' to guide public policy:

- Equitable and sustainable socio-economic development and self-reliance
- Conservation of the natural environment
- The preservation and promotion of cultural heritage and
- The establishment of good governance – generally interpreted as meaning in the form of a democracy.

Through the 1990s the King gradually devolved power to an elected council and at the end of last year he announced that the country's first national democratic election would be held in 2008, when he would hand over the constitutional monarchy to his son.

Over the last 20 years Bhutan has expanded both its network of roads and its forest areas, provided free universal education and health services, and also retained its cultural strengths. It recently banned all tobacco products.

Despite the introduction of television and the Internet to the country in 1998, Bhutan has so far succeeded in limiting exposure to global trade, foreign capital investment, modern mass media and tourism. The country as a sovereign state is more secure than ever, it is greener than most countries and becoming greener, and crime rates are low.

World HR Congress host takes on Asia Pacific presidency



President of the Singapore Human Resources Institute and chairperson of the steering committee of the 11th World HR Congress to be held in Singapore at the end of May, Mrs Lim-Ho Geok Choo has now succeeded Sri Lanka's Daya Bollegala as President of the Asia Pacific Federation of Human Resource Management.

Mrs Lim's 'day job' is Vice President (Human Resources), SIA Engineering (SIAEC), which provides aviation engineering services including maintenance, repair and overhaul of commercial aircraft, engines and related components. In 2001 her company also appointed her a director on the board of Messier Services Asia, of which SIAEC owns 40 per cent.

She is also a Member of Parliament representing Singapore's People's Action Party and Deputy Chairman of Singapore Professionals' and Executives' Co-operative (SPEC).

But it is far short of utopia, with relatively low life expectancy and as yet unimpressive literacy rates. And, it has become increasingly evident that Bhutan cannot ignore modern-day global economic realities; it now faces the challenge of protecting and enhancing its policy of GNH while also improving its GNP in a fiercely competitive world.

International conference

In 2004 Bhutan responded to requests from international agencies to share its approach by hosting the first major conference on the subject. Over 300 participants of whom 82 were scholars and experts from 20 countries attended. They came to a consensus that, while the GNH initiative may be unique to Bhutan, the concept itself need not be restricted either to Buddhist societies or small homogeneous countries.

Moreover several trends seem to be helping the idea of GNH take hold more broadly. The upsurge in socially responsible investing in the north is slowly filtering into the south; room is now being made for moral and ethical values and a bottom line that includes social and environmental dimensions as well as money.

In addition GDP alone is no longer considered a valid measure of progress. There are now various kinds of quality of life indices and well-being indicators; efforts are being made to devise a new economic index of well-being gauged by indicators like satisfaction with personal relationships, employment, meaning and purpose in life, as well as, for example, the extent to which new drugs and technology improve standards of

living. In the UK the independent New Economics Foundation think tank is pushing the implementation of a set of national well-being accounts that would balance assets such as trust and engagement with liabilities like stress and depression.

Australia's former deputy Prime Minister Tim Fischer has called for a well-being and happiness indicator to be collated and controlled by the Australian Bureau of Statistics just like the consumer price index of inflation. Referring to racial tensions following recent riots in that country, he said the index "would help to some extent in projecting hotspots of community negativity."

Global network

Following the Bhutan conference, a Gross International Happiness Network (GIH) was established to continue the dialogue via conferences and seminars round the world, through research and publications.

There is also a website:
www.grossinternationalhappiness.org ○

*The benefits of frequent positive affect: does happiness lead to success? by Sonja Lyubomirsky, Laura King and Ed Diener, *Psychological Bulletin*, vol 131, no 6, November 2005

The Hon Lyonpo Jigmi Y Thinley will speak on Bhutan's GNH philosophy at the World HR Congress in Singapore on 31st May. Other keynote speakers include Professor Wee Chow Hou and Professor Dave Ulrich. The conference will be opened on 30th May by Singapore Prime Minister Mr Lee Hsieu Loong. For full programme and to book, see www.hrcongress2006.com

When community inve

Last year a Venezuelan rum-producing company's initiative to eradicate juvenile crime and delinquency in the region where its head office is situated received an award from FIDAGH, the federation of Latin American HR associations,* and subsequently became a Harvard Business School case study. *WorldLink* editor Susanne Lawrence reports

Albert C Vollmer, chief executive of Compañía Anónima Ron Santa Teresa (CARST) since 1999, is a fourth generation member of the family who have owned and run the business since 1895 (rum production actually began a year later).

Santa Teresa's significance for the town of El Consejo in Venezuela's Revenga Municipality has always been a concern of the Vollmer family. Over the years this has manifested itself in community projects such as the building and equipping of schools and sports facilities and restoration of the old Venezuelan Railway station, thus generating employment as well as contributing to education, housing and health.

This philanthropic tradition had by no means bypassed Alberto, who had actually spent several months living in a shack in Barrio Carapita, a slum area in western Caracas, in order to inform a paper for his higher education studies in civil engineering. He organised a number of sports activities with barrio dwellers at the time and then went on to work in local government to build infrastructure in the poorest communities.

It was therefore something of a shock when in February 2000 an area of company property close to where CARST managers worked was invaded by 256 Revenga Municipality families, led by a militant supporter of the governing Bolivarian Movement 200 party, who saw the Vollmers as the 'oligarchic' enemy of the revolution.

When Alberto met the land invasion leaders, they told him their intention was to get the region's businesses and government authorities to pay attention to their plight; President Hugo Chávez had often called on people who lacked the means to cover their subsistence to invade the 'unproductive' land of large estates.

Alberto felt the invasion obligated management to rethink company values and

its relationship with the local environment and, following negotiations, the company proposed to donate the land for housing, a gesture which would have the additional advantage of improving the look and general prosperity of the area.

Nevertheless, on February 15, 2003 three members of a gang of juvenile delinquents known as La Placita entered the grounds of Hacienda Santa Teresa, the main company plant, assaulting a security guard. When Alberto learned of this incident he asked security manager Jimin Pérez to find the youngsters, and bring them to the office.

What he proposed was that they should redeem damages by working for the company without pay for three consecutive months. He said that if they did not want to accept his offer, he would call the Aragua state police and report the incident. At the time Aragua topped the list of police forces that summarily executed prisoners.

The youths not only accepted the offer, but they brought with them 20 other members of the La Placita gang. Alberto, Pérez and institutional relations manager Francisco Magallanes were surprised by the response but resolved to go ahead without giving much thought to what they were about to do. They decided to name the project Alcatraz, after the notorious prison in San Francisco. According to the managers, the starting point was that the youngsters should understand that their attitude and way of thinking was the principal prison from which they needed to escape.

From crisis to opportunity

The initiative was a considerable challenge and not least for the managers who had to design a programme for young people with whom almost no one wanted to become involved; not only did the boys have drug problems, but many of them had committed serious crimes, including murder.

However, CARST managers realised the problem would persist unless they addressed it in a way that differed from the usual – raising walls, adding guards, installing security



A daily game of rugby was a means of channelling energy. As coach, Alberto's brother Henrique Vollmer, the Project Alcatraz

devices, etc. In Perez' words: "Once more the crisis had to be turned into an opportunity."

Alberto and his colleagues decided that the youths should work off their three months' 'time' in the mornings, in an area removed from the hacienda. In the afternoons they would be given instruction in values, legal issues, controlling the use of drugs and community work. Management asked the then CARST human resources manager, who had a degree in psychology, to prepare a psychological support programme.

At the end of each afternoon, the youths were to play rugby, with Alberto's brother Henrique as coach. Rugby, a game unknown to any of the boys, was the Vollmer brothers' favorite sport. They felt that rugby would allow the youths to use up energy and require them to work as a team.

Alberto and his management team, having observed the change in behaviour among the youths as they completed their three months' programme in June 2003, decided to try a second cohort recruited from the La Placita gang's rival, known as El Cementerio. A third gang then, on its own initiative, came to the company asking to join the project.

CARST management learned on the hoof what they considered to be the project's hits (eg length of programme, the choice of rugby) and misses (eg youth groups larger than 20,

* Ron Santa Teresa won an Oscar Alvear Urrutia (founder of FIDAP) Award for excellence in human resources management initiatives which was presented at the FIDAGH conference in Colombia last May. It was accepted on behalf of the company by Flavio Rodríguez, then CARST's HR manager.

Investment's a way of life



Discipline and learning teamwork. With the chief executive's support, the boys ultimately became a cup-winning side

Directorate, and the World Bank, Caracas Stock Exchange, Aserca Airlines, Distribuidora Eterna, Farmatodo, Grupo Humana, the Hay Group, Inveca Pittsburg, Nike de Venezuela, Protinal, Sisa and Sigalca.

Under the slogan 'crime zero' it continues to offer young men in the area with criminal backgrounds an initial three months of intensive labour, education in human values, rugby coaching, psychological assistance and community service.

At the end of this phase, 'graduates' can opt to enter formal employment with Ron Santa Teresa, Café Alcatraz, where they participate in all the stages of gourmet coffee production, from planting and harvesting to roasting and packing – and in the near future distribution and sales, or other companies who may hire them; or they can continue their education in El Taller del Constructor Popular, where they learn alternative and conventional techniques for building homes.

In addition, the Alcatraz Mothers Network is being established in order to extend the scope of the project to the families of participants (currently all male).

In the first two years 112 young people had been through the programme, of whom 37 had been placed into formal employment; no less significantly, four gangs had been peacefully disbanded, generating a 40 per cent reduction in the local crime rate. Proyecto Alcatraz also counts as one of its achievements participation in the national 7-a side rugby championships and winning the silver cup at the 2004 Universidad Central de Venezuela tournament.

Of course the project has not been all plain sailing: some company employees whose relatives – or they themselves – had been

crime victims felt uneasy coming across the youths every day. On the other hand the experience was gratifying for those who were related to the boys or friends of their families.

Also fellow directors were concerned about the company's reputation if the project failed; if, for instance, the youths failed to find jobs and returned to crime. But others felt the company could not afford for the community to perceive that their welfare was no longer of interest, and they also pointed out that the project had generated considerable satisfaction on the part of employees.

Further afield

Not least, the novelty of the Alcatraz project captured media attention, and it became public knowledge. Several business leaders then contacted Alberto in order to learn the extent to which the initiative could be replicated. And in April 2004 the Colombian Ambassador to Venezuela arranged for Alberto to share project experience with his President Alvaro Uribe and explore its relevance for Colombia's peace and social reinsertion programme.

The same year it was chosen by the Venezuelan Chamber of the Construction Industry as the social initiative of 2004 and by the World Bank as a potential model to be scaled up for implementation elsewhere.

And finally the story was presented as a case study to the Social Enterprise Knowledge Network formed by 10 Ibero-American universities and coordinated by Harvard University to study corporate strategies in which social initiatives are part of the business because they improve the competitiveness of the company at the same time as generating benefits for the community. ○

Horacio Quiros, FIDAGH Vice President, shares some of the thinking of the committee that gave CARST the award:

"Of course the personal commitment of Ron Santa Teresa's owner was key to the success of this remarkable example of social responsibility in action, but so too was the involvement of managers, supervisors and employees who had to overcome natural caution and resentment in order to work side by side with people who had been leading lives of crime."

"These young people acquired working experience and a sense of being part of a team and a company; they remain proud of their jobs today and actually foresee a proper conventional career."

"This is a great example for HR professionals from other companies and, indeed, in other parts of the world."



After a morning's work, the boys receive instruction in legal and ethical issues

Plus ça change... towards a global



On the eve of the conference of the Human Resources Professionals Association of Ontario, Canada, where the World Federation of Personnel Management Associations will hold its next board meeting, *WorldLink* invited conference speaker Jean-Louis Mutte, academic and consultant, to explain why he thinks the similarities in approaches to people management worldwide are about to outweigh global differences

In many respects, I am a lucky man. I have the opportunity to travel all over the world, from China to France, from Canada to Algeria, from the so-called Old World to emerging countries. And, as a professor of HRM, what particularly strikes me is the fact that, regardless of where you are and notwithstanding the local culture and customs, more and more the same rules and processes seem to apply and the differences, if any, vanish very quickly.

I am now convinced that a global model of management is not merely emerging but steadily taking hold all over the world and – I hope – for the better. This model is significantly based on what I would call the ‘North Atlantic model’, a merger of North American and European patterns and practices – lucky Canadians, they have the best of both worlds – with increasing influence from fast-growing Asia.

Let me outline some of the more obvious evidence that drove me to this conclusion.

DEMOGRAPHICS

- Talent shortage
- Changing family patterns
- Aging of the workforce
- Diversity

ECONOMY

- Health costs
- Retirement costs
- Demand for qualified workers
- Mergers and acquisitions

GLOBAL

- Offshoring
- Globalisation
- Uniformisation of labour standards
- Safety and security
- CSR and NGO

TECHNOLOGY

- Technology
- Knowledge management
- eLearning
- Protection of intangible assets

SOURCE: SHRM '2004-5 Workplace forecast: a strategic outlook'

Some recent work led by SHRM's Global Panel¹ showed that similar concerns and challenges are being raised across the board in all countries. This is hardly surprising since the triggers are so common: demographic change, the race for growth and global competition.

Add to these the fact that we are now in a knowledge economy, and there is no reason for people not to be managed identically regardless of language, ethnic origin or culture. Rather than building independent local models, it will just be a case of adapting the global one.

Another US survey, this one undertaken by the HR Institute at the University of Tampa, Florida, among a large group of HR directors on both sides of the Atlantic, showed startling consistency among the list of key issues they face and are expecting to face in the future: managing change, leadership, focus on the customer but also improving productivity, enhancing quality and innovation and creativity.

Meanwhile, the WFPMA's own survey, which covered more than 35 countries, demonstrates even more graphically the global aspect of people management.² For, to the question ‘What are the three areas that represent significant challenges for you today?’, the top three answers were, yes, change management, leadership development and HR effectiveness measurement, followed closely by organisational effectiveness, staffing and succession planning. In three years from now, pretty much the same picture appears with specific emphasis on staffing, retention and succession planning.

When you get into the detailed results for each region, these do not vary significantly, albeit learning and development sometimes overtakes leadership development.

Tools and processes

Technology has dramatically changed the way we manage people. It now allows transfer of data and

information at the speed of light; it empowers managers and employees in an unprecedented way, providing the workforce with opportunities to take decisions about their own future to an

extent they would never before have dreamed of. And of course these tools and processes are truly global: used all over the planet in the same way by a Canadian or a Chinese, a Belgian or a Brazilian. Technology and HR software have deeply modified the way we manage our people, whether we like it or not. Was it a good thing to let the means dictate the ends rather than the other way round? Too late to worry! Has it really enhanced people management? No doubt! And no doubt it really is global.

Values, work ethics and attitudes

Today everywhere has its Sarbanes Oxley or equivalent. Every country is struggling to implement appropriate governance procedures and, regardless of where you are, these seem to be based on the same set of rules and regulations. Again this is not surprising, since corporations wishing to run their businesses globally are obliged to comply with internationally accepted standards and laws. The governing authorities have different names – WTO, EU, NAFTA – but they all converge. So why would you expect people management not to follow the same path? There is no way you can monitor business and monitor people in separate and inconsistent ways. The good news is that it will lead to uniformity of labour standards and bring consistency to workforce management.

Competition and stakeholders

Competition is global; the search for differentiating factors is shared equally by every organisation, regardless of origins or aims. Offshoring is a perfect example of an irreversible trend that will affect people management across the board, because you don't just export the work, you also transfer your HR processes.

Education

As a professor in a school of management I am constantly impressed by the ease our students demonstrate in travelling, learning, mixing with those from the other end of the planet. I am French; my next class will be

¹ The Society for Human Resource Management Global Panel is a group of international HR experts who constantly scrutinise key HR trends across the world

² See www.wfma.com/PDFs/hrglobalchallenges.pdf

HR management model

in English; the audience will be Canadian, Korean, Chinese, Danish, Spanish, Mexican – guess what: there are even some French! And the course will be simply global. When it is a matter of teaching corporate social responsibility or the employee life cycle, the origin matters little. My school is linked to more than 200 universities and business schools and we permanently host more than 40 nationalities on our campus.

Would you expect those people not to behave in similar ways?

And so...

Are we close to having a single neat HR model worldwide? Most likely. When? Well it will surely take some time but the momentum is gaining pace thanks to globalisation and the implementation of consistent rules and processes.

Take Accenture, Danone and Schlumberger, for instance – three major corporations with different countries of origin: brilliant examples of diversity management, they obviously gain a great deal from their diverse workforce. And yet how they manage their people is similar wherever they operate and they are directly comparable in this regard despite their different cultural backgrounds. Fundamentally, there is no real difference in the way they care about and nurture their people.

Similar sources of growth and development and identical ambitions for a better future will bring the people of every organisation and consequently of every



NEW PRESIDENT FOR NAHRMA

Diane Wiesenthal, President of the Canadian Council of HR Associations since October 2005, has now succeeded Brian Foster as President of the North American HRM Association (NAHRMA).

Formerly secretary to the Canadian Council, which coordinates Canada's nine provincial HR associations, and a CCHRA director for two years, she has also been President of the HRM association of Manitoba, based in Winnipeg.

Ms Wiesenthal studied human resource management at the University of Manitoba and at Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, and is currently working as Director, HR Consulting Services for the Canadian Wheat Board.

country to work in a more and more seamless manner. HR professionals will therefore act the same way, the difference being only in pace and the necessary legal and cultural adaptation. ○

Jean-Louis Mutte is managing director of the Groupe Sup de Co Amiens Picardie business school and a partner with consultants Global People Matters.

He worked in HR for more than 25 years in roles ranging from head of recruitment for Xerox France, through training director with Nixdorf Computers to global HR director for Accenture.

He will be speaking at the Human Resources Professionals Association of Ontario (HRPAO) conference in Toronto, Canada, in February on 'A global HR management model: loving both Ontario and Quebec' and also on 'Alignment of HR with the firm's strategy'

Skills shortages threaten India's IT dominance

In addition to intense competition from low-cost locations such as South Africa, China and Eastern Europe, India, which continues to dominate global offshore IT services, faces a shortfall of up to half a million skilled workers in the next five years.

According to a report from business consultants McKinsey and the Indian IT association Nasscom,¹ currently only about 25 per cent of technical graduates and 10-15 per cent of general college graduates are suitable for employment in offshore IT and business process outsourcing.

In particular the country lacks large numbers of workers who are fluent in French, German, Japanese and Spanish, says the report. But also wages and other cost rises of 10-15 per cent a year are making it harder for Indian-based call-centre providers, among others, to be able to offer customers the 30-40 per cent savings they seek in moving offshore.

Meanwhile, US 'futurists' the Herman Group predict that employers in developed countries will continue to send work to less developed regions in order to save costs but work that is sensitive to customer satisfaction, involves cross-cultural communication or is technical with a need for quality or creativity will return home if indigenous workers are available to do it.²

¹The NASSCOM-McKinsey Study 2005, price: Rs 15,000/- US\$ 415, www.nasscom.org/publications.asp

²www.hermangroup.com/futurespeak/top10_2006.html

Quality award for Quebec's HR body

Quebec's equivalent of Japan's Deming Prize or the United States' Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award has been won by the Province's professional HR association, the ORHRI.

Awarded to businesses and organisations that have achieved the highest quality in their management processes and productions, the Grand Prix québécois de la qualité was presented at the end of October by Quebec Premier Jean Charest (left in photo).

In accepting it, ORHRI chair France Dupéré (centre) and president and CEO Florent Francoeur (on right of photo), a WFPMA board member, emphasised their organisation's ongoing quest for excellence in its efforts to improve the world of work in Quebec.

ORHRI has almost 7,500 members, of whom 6,300 hold professional HR and IR qualifications.



THE WORLDBLINK HR CALENDAR

January 30-31, 2006

Toronto, Canada

WFPMA Board Meeting

February 1-3, 2006

HRPAO Annual Conference & Exhibition

Tel: +1 416 923 2324

Fax: +1 416 923 7264

Email: info@hrpao.org

February 7-9, 2006

London, England

CIPD Annual Reward Conference

Tel: +44-208 263 3434

Fax: +44 208 263 3367

Email: conf@cipd.co.uk

March 20-22, 2006

Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

SHRM 29th Global Forum

Tel: +1 703 548 3440

Fax: +1 703 258 6035

Email: rbarrera@shrm.org

March 23-24, 2006

Quito, Ecuador

ADPE 14th National Congress

Tel: +593 2 2222 121

Fax: +593 2 2557 268

Email: adpe@interactive.net.ec

March 2006

Dhaka, Bangladesh

IPM Bangladesh Annual Conference

Tel: +880 2 911 3932

Fax: +880 2 933 1054

Email: ipm@bol-online.com

March 29, 2006

Leiria, Portugal

APG 12th Training Conference

Tel.: +351 21 352 2717

Fax: +351 21 352 2713

Email: global@apg.pt

April 4-6, 2006

London, England

CIPD Annual Learning, Training and Development Conference & Exhibition

Tel: +44 208 612 6200

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