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## Line of Sight? HR Concerns on a Routine Flight

By Chris Till

### “Kia Ora” (“Be well,” a Maori greeting)

I thought I would do something a little bit different with the president’s message this time around and just tell a simple story that has an equally simple, but vital, message for all professional HR colleagues—all those recruiting and anyone in the business of leading people.

Recently, I was on a flight from one New Zealand city to another—thank you to Air New Zealand and also to “the gods of no turbulence.” The flight and my fellow passengers were pleasant. No doubt they were looking forward to the busy day ahead.

Here’s an important detail: I was seated in row 20, seat E. I had a very clear view to the seat row directly in front of me. I am not intentionally nosey or intrusive. As my parents used to say, “Keep your own counsel.” However, I noticed, coincidentally, that someone was reading the same model Kindle as me in the row in front. Then I saw something that caused me to pause. I was time-warped back to my first job interview for a “trainee personnel officer” role in the early 1980s with my first boss and mentor, Sid, a former World War II tank commander. Yes, I know I am showing my age (56, actually).

Just before Sid offered me the job, he sat me down and laid out his absolute standards for me: “Personnel must be absolutely trustworthy. That means the highest integrity and trustworthiness, young Chris.” (Sid called me that a lot.) “But the most important thing is that confidentiality is absolute. Without this, we have nothing—and no credibility with anyone. It is rule No. 1. If you let me down on this, I will fire you.”

Clearly, I have never forgotten this. So what caused me to pause? The passenger in the row in front had moved from reading their Kindle to going through papers.

In full sight of me, they clearly showed the job they were hiring for, the organization it was for and the resume of a person being considered.

I could clearly see the full name of the person, whom I will call “DK.” I could see where DK was currently employed, their current remuneration and address, what job they were doing, and a lot more. Also visible: who the reviewer on the plane worked for and the professional agency being used in the hiring process. I could also see, I believe, the name of the reviewer.

The pages turned, and I could see the results of the applicant’s extensive psychometric profiling and testing and, to cap it all, the confidential write-up of the consultancy about DK, including very personal comments about how they performed in a screening interview.

I was then exposed to the same information for two other candidates in full.

I will leave it to employment lawyers, employment relations experts, and fellow HR and leadership professionals to go through all the issues that arise from this behavior and the risks involved (for multiple parties) in terms of reputation, legal exposure, PR and professionally.

In part, I could relate to the person exposing this highly sensitive information. They looked very busy and stressed out—they could

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easily be a victim of having to do more with less or of a life of over-commitment.

However, I could find no excuse for that behavior in public. I had the thought that an unscrupulous mischief-maker could have easily snapped a high-definition image with their smartphone and posted it to Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc. The reviewer was also exposing themselves to potential blackmail.

*‘Confidentiality is absolute. Without this, we have nothing—and no credibility with anyone.’*

I also thought that what I had seen was especially concerning in our small nation, with just two degrees of separation and our tight-knit communities. Luckily, I did not know any of the applicants’ names.

Just to check that I wasn’t being a bit uptight in my horrified reaction to what I’d seen, I subsequently spoke discreetly to a very experienced and senior member of Human Resources Institute of New Zealand

(HRINZ) and a highly prominent executive recruiter. They were both equally perturbed. Here is where it became really interesting: While neither one had experienced anything as extreme as that which I had encountered, they both said they had regularly experienced similar, arguably less extreme, cases in not dissimilar situations. One involved a significant set of board papers, another sensitive commercial information, and another financial results for a significant and well-known publicly listed company.

The simple lesson for all those in the world of people and work is clear, and to quote Sid: “Confidentiality is absolute. Without this, we have nothing—and no credibility with anyone.”

On a final, maybe lighter note, here are two books I have been reading in my attempt to better understand Brexit, the Donald Trump phenomenon and the world zeitgeist that seems to be emerging: *Age of Anger: A History of the Present* by Pankaj Mishra and *Stand Firm: Resisting the Self-Improvement Craze* by Svend Brinkmann. We in HR are not immune to the impact of any of these uncertainties.

Chris Till is president of the Asia Pacific Federation of HRM and chief executive of HRINZ.

## How HR Professionals Can Create a **Value Proposition for Their Business**

By Md. Musharraf Hossain

Value is usually defined by the receiver, not the giver. Therefore, any value proposition begins with a focus on receivers, not givers.

For HR professionals, argument on value means that rather than imposing on others their beliefs, goals and actions through defined rules and regulations, they first need to be open to what others want. This fundamental principle is too often overlooked. Often, HR professionals have beliefs, goals and actions that translate into things they want to have happen in their organization without paying enough attention to the perspectives of others.

This gap of understanding often leads to disengagement among the people in the organization and its customers. Often, HR fails to make an impact.

Influence with impact occurs when HR professionals start with the beliefs and goals of the receivers:

- Who are the key stakeholders I must serve?
- What are the goals and values of the receiving stakeholders?
- What is important to them? What do they want?

When these requirements are fully understood, HR professionals can show how an investment in an HR practice will help stakeholders gain value as defined by each stakeholder.

To an employee worried about getting laid off, HR professionals should demonstrate that being more productive will help the employee stay employed. To a line manager worried about reaching strategic goals, HR professionals need to show how investment in HR work will help deliver business results. For customers looking for goods and solutions, HR professionals need to help create value in the products or services customers receive. For shareholders worried about shared returns and growth, HR must create organizations that deliver results today and intangibles that give owners confidence that results will be delivered in the future.

It is now time to think “we are the business” instead of “we are the business partner.” HR professionals must have knowledge of external business realities before they can frame, execute and create substantive

value through even the most basic of HR agendas.

HR professionals should also focus on competitive advantage, which will create something unique for the organization that competitors cannot easily copy. They should consider what they do better than their competitors that is highly valued by customers, owners, employees or managers.

HR professionals must align practices with the requirements of internal and external stakeholders. When this is successful, HR creates value as defined by those stakeholders. Consider:

- How do we organize HR activities to deliver maximum value?
- How do we create an HR strategy that sets an agenda for how HR will help our business succeed?
- How do we ensure that HR professionals will know what to do and have the skills to do it?

When HR professionals respond to these questions, they will know why others would benefit by listening to them because they will be delivering real value. And, they will know what that value is and how it is contributing to the business. When HR professionals begin with the

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receiver in mind, they can:

- More quickly emerge as full strategic contributors.
- Add greater value for key stakeholders (customers, investors, line managers and employees).
- Enhance business productivity.
- Achieve measurable and valuable results.

- Create sustainable competitive advantage.
- Have more fun in their careers.

Indeed, they will have created a value proposition for business success.

[Md. Musharrof Hossain is president of the Bangladesh Society for Human Resources Management and head of human resources management at ICDDR,B (International Center for Diarrheal Disease Research).]

## Australian HR Institute Creates Mandatory Certification Program

By Lyn Goodear

Following a 2015 inquiry into Australia's financial systems, the federal minister for revenue and financial services, Kelly O'Dwyer, announced last year that Australia's financial planners will be required by law to hold a degree, undertake a professional year, pass an exam, commit to continuous professional development (CPD) and subscribe to a code of ethics.

One might wonder what standards financial advisors have been required to satisfy if these particulars are now to be mandated under legislation. Aren't all professional practitioners required to meet standards as fundamental as these?

The reality is that financial planners can gain a basic qualification to practice in little more than seven days. The advice that financial advisors give touches a great many lives and also affects the corporate culture of financial institutions. Yet advisors might be bringing to their practice nothing more than a self-serving desire to make a commission on sales. To say that all financial planners operate in that way would be unfair, but to date members of the public have had no way of distinguishing between trustworthy and untrustworthy financial planners. Therefore, the public suffers at the hands of the latter, whose incompetence or unsavory practices have been bringing the occupation into disrepute.

Regrettably, almost everything that can be said about the standing of financial planners could be said about HR practitioners. HR practitioners in Australia are not required to hold a university degree, have done a professional year, pass an exam, maintain currency with CPD or sign on to a code of ethics.

It might be said in defense of HR practitioners that they are not entrusted with significant quantities of citizens' money. While that is true, there is ample evidence that the difference between good and bad HR is reflected in the difference between healthy and toxic work cultures, competitive and unsustainable businesses, and happy and miserable employees.

While many HR practitioners have taken it upon themselves to gain an appropriate university degree to inform their professional practice, they are not required by regulation to have done so.

A great many Australian practitioners—around 20,000—are members of the Australian Human Resources Institute (AHRI), the professional association I lead as CEO, but that is not a legal requirement and many practitioners are not AHRI members.

Practicing professional members of AHRI are required, of course, to undertake CPD, and they subscribe to a code of ethics and professional conduct that is supported by complaints and disciplinary procedures.

However, as the HR practicing environment is becoming more complex and litigious in a more competitive global business world, AHRI has seen the writing on the wall. And so, beginning this year all practicing professional members will be required to undertake a rigorous HR certification credential that sets a high bar for practice.

HR certification requires a minimum professional practicing period, the equivalent of a university degree in addition to specific professional knowledge, and evidence via a mandatory capstone unit that candidates seeking certification can actually do what they say they can do.

An independent National Certification Council (NCC) has been set up by AHRI to oversee the administration of standards under the new certification initiative and to have the final say on the suitability of candidates who have qualified for admission to certification.

The first two crops of candidates completed their training in March and August 2016. They were admitted, at the discretion of the NCC, as certified HR practitioners and became entitled to carry the post-nominal designation of CPHR or FCPHR.

In taking this action, AHRI has signaled that it is heading down the path of self-regulation in the hope that will forestall any moves toward involuntary government regulation.

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The human failings within the corporate world that started with Enron and ended with Lehman Brothers and the global financial crisis are repeated too often and increasingly prompt questions about the role of HR. Inevitably, questions will be asked about what HR was doing in the midst of the recent Volkswagen fiasco. HR needs to come from a better place to answer those awkward questions or, better still, to play a greater role in their prevention.

[Lyn Goodear is CEO of AHRI.]

# Gearing Up for the Future of Hong Kong's HRM Profession

By Chris Davis

Following extensive cross-industry consultations with various stakeholders, the Hong Kong Institute of Human Resource Management (HKIHRM) has developed the Specification of Competency Standards for the Human Resource Management Sector (HRM SCS), which represents a compilation of the major competency requirements and performance outcome standards in seven specific HRM functional areas.

The role of human resources as a strategic partner to business is widely recognized in the HRM profession as Hong Kong becomes an increasingly knowledge-based economy. To ensure that HR practitioners continue to build the knowledge and capabilities to support the long-term sustainable growth of individual enterprises and the economy at large, HKIHRM has completed the key stages of writing HRM SCS.

As the largest professional body representing the HRM profession in Hong Kong, HKIHRM has over the years developed a comprehensive pool of cross-sector HRM knowledge and competency requirements, putting the institute in the ideal position to play a key role as the interface between stakeholders to identify and compile the HRM SCS.

The HRM SCS has been constructed in line with the government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region's overarching Qualifications Framework (QF). The QF, a seven-level hierarchy of qualifications designed to apply to individual industry sectors, was established by the Education Bureau in 2008. Since then, it has been implemented across academic, vocational and continuing education arenas.

Patrick Pang, general manager of the Qualifications Framework Secretariat—which has collaborated with HKIHRM in the process of writing the HRM SCS—says the QF provides HR practitioners at any stage of their career with the opportunity to move from one qualification level to another via accessible articulation pathways. Importantly, he adds, the QF is underpinned by a robust quality assurance mechanism. “All qualifications recognized under the QF are locally accredited and quality-assured, so participants can be confident that their qualifications, industry experiences and achievements will be recognized by the government and individual business or professional sectors.”

Pang explains that, in the context of the HRM profession, the QF provides a wide range of benefits for employers and employees. It allows employers to better identify employees' skills gaps and training needs and more effectively design HR training programs and courses to ensure assessable outcomes. Meanwhile, employees are motivated to pursue lifelong learning through a wider choice of suitable programs to meet their career and professional aspirations, while having their prior experience and competencies officially recognized. The HRM SCS also allows training providers to design programs and courses to meet specific industry needs and standards with quality-assured courses based on the knowledge, skill requirements and performance outcomes of each unit of competency specified in the HRM SCS.

The QF's provision of flexible, quality learning pathways is designed to replace a proliferation of qualifications that offered few common quality benchmarks, Pang says. A QF credit system measures the volume of learning of a qualification. For example, an average of 10 notional

learning hours is equivalent to one QF credit. Learning hours can include classroom instruction, online learning, examination, assessment and self-study.

Pang says that while the QF is designed to improve the overall education and training environment for practitioners in their own industry or business sector, the framework shares similarities with QF

systems implemented in Europe, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. To ensure the recognition and accreditation of qualifications and hierarchical learning outcomes, a series of international level-to-level comparability studies were conducted with countries where QF systems have already been established. “Benchmarking ensures international recognition for Hong Kong's QF and aligns QF growth and development with other economies,” Pang explains.

Leading this cross-discipline and cross-industry HRM initiative is Wilfred Wong, JP, chairperson of the Cross-Industry Training Advisory Committee (CITAC) for the HRM Sector. “I'm honored to be appointed as chairperson of the Cross-Industry Training Advisory Committee for the Human Resource Management Sector to work with committee members and stakeholders across various industries and business sectors in Hong Kong,” Wong says. “In implementing the Qualifications Framework for Hong Kong's HRM profession, the committee has committed to providing a platform to promote and drive lifelong learning, while enhancing the overall capabilities of HR practitioners to become a strategic partner to organizations of all sizes and business natures.”

## GATHERING CROSS-INDUSTRY FEEDBACK

One of the biggest challenges in drawing up the HRM SCS based on the more general QF is to make the standards practical for the profession. Margaret Cheng, vice chairperson of the CITAC for the HRM Sector and vice president of HKIHRM, explains that a large number of HR practitioners were engaged to share details of their work, including specific tasks and the required knowledge and competencies it takes to do their job. “Close to 100 senior and professional HKIHRM members from various industries and professional backgrounds answered our calls to contribute in the drafting process of the HRM SCS,” she says. “The culminated experience and knowledge these members have from handling and resolving real-life HR issues on a daily basis makes their insights and suggestions very practical and highly representative for the industry.”

An additional challenge, Cheng explains, was to balance the views of a wide range of stakeholders, including HR specialists and generalists from multiple HRM functions, as well as stakeholders outside the profession, including training providers, those in academia and



Photo courtesy of HKIHRM

The Cross-Industry Training Advisory Committee for HRM Sector

representatives from various disciplines. “In order to reach consensus, quality input from industry stakeholders was taken in the form of multiple rounds of individual interviews, briefing sessions, focus group consultations, industrywide workshops and small-group consultations with individuals from the profession and academia. Their insights ensure that the final product of the HRM SCS can fully meet the needs of the industry and will be adopted by the HRM profession across industries and sectors.”

*The well-structured HRM SCS will provide employers with a better understanding of their employees’ competencies ... and ‘help HR departments to better implement manpower planning, recruitment, staff development and promotion.’*

Cheng believes the introduction of the HRM SCS will help promote continuous learning while offering a clearer picture of the contributions HR professionals make in their industries. It will also encourage HR practitioners to be more active in developing their careers by giving them a clear view of what they need to achieve to move up to higher levels. “With the HRM profession being the first-ever cross-industry profession to introduce the QF, the HRM SCS is a serious effort to present the HRM functions in a more transparent framework that addresses qualifications, learning and competency. It will potentially become an excellent guideline for all industries and sectors to develop or enhance their own industry-specific HRM standards.”

## CREATING A COMPREHENSIVE LIST OF COMPETENCIES

In its role as the professional writer of the HRM SCS, HKIHRM spearheaded the coordination of the cross-industry consultations. David Li, president of HKIHRM and a member of CITAC for the HRM Sector, explains that the views gathered helped to create over 200 units of competency spread across seven HRM functional areas:

- 1 Organizational development and HR strategy.
- 2 Workforce planning and resourcing.
- 3 Reward management.
- 4 Talent management.
- 5 HR policies and processes.
- 6 Compliance and risk management.
- 7 Employee engagement.

“The HRM SCS is not designed for any particular industry but represents the cross-discipline, cross-industry requirements in any of the specified HRM functions in the HRM SCS that can be applied to all organizations in any business or industry sector, regardless of their company size, scope of business or business nature,” says Li, adding that the HRM SCS covers all the required competencies needed at different levels of the QF.

Li explains that plans are in place to present the HRM SCS for industrywide consultation and feedback during the second quarter of 2017. “It is important that the HRM SCS is understood and recognized as a comprehensive platform which acts as a yardstick for Hong Kong’s HRM profession,” he says.

Senna Cheung, senior human resources manager at the Hong Kong and China Gas Co. Ltd. and co-chairperson of the HKIHRM Remuneration Committee, says that for those new to the profession, the HRM SCS will provide a framework to understand the different skills and competencies required. This will subsequently help HR practitioners plan their career development. “HR practitioners can benchmark their competencies against those stipulated in the standards at each level to polish their HRM knowledge and skill sets,” she says.

Cheung believes the HRM SCS will assist the development of HR practitioners’ career paths in a systematic way and enhance their professionalism. At the same time, it will provide both junior and experienced HR professionals with a platform to integrate their academic qualifications and work experience in the pursuit of continuing education. “HR practitioners will be able to map their career and plan their learning path by taking relevant HRM SCS-based training and learning programs and having related job exposure,” she says.

In addition, Cheung continues, the well-structured HRM SCS will provide employers with a better understanding of their employees’ competencies across the seven HRM functional areas. “This will help HR departments to better implement manpower planning, recruitment, staff development and promotion.”

## SERVING COMPANIES OF ALL SIZES

It is also important that HRM SCS meets the needs of organizations large and small. Roughly 320,000 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are in operation in Hong Kong, providing job opportunities for nearly 1.3 million people, or around 46 percent of total employment. Joe Chau Kwok-ming, president of The Hong Kong General Chamber of Small and Medium Business, says the HRM SCS will play an important role for SMEs in recruiting HR staff with the right competencies and experience to match the needs of their businesses. “Generally speaking, the organizational structure of Hong Kong’s SMEs is simple, and employees usually need to take on several roles in their jobs,” Chau says. He adds that, compared with large companies, SMEs typically have fewer resources available to invest in staff training and development, so the HRM SCS will be a useful tool to allow SME employers to identify employees that fit their HR roles suitably and perform competently.

While acknowledging that many HR staff at SMEs are go-getters who have built up years of experience through their handling of various practical HR and employment issues, Chau notes that not all of them possess formal HR qualifications. Nevertheless, by using the HRM SCS as a guide, HR practitioners working for SMEs can match their knowledge, skills and performance outcomes to the requirements and standards of each unit of competency while attaining the right level of HR professional recognition under the QF, Chau says.

He suggests that SME employers similarly can use the HRM SCS to select and identify appropriate training courses to help staff upskill their HRM knowledge and competencies. Chau recognizes that a lifelong learning culture embraced by HR practitioners will benefit both Hong Kong employees and employers in the long run, resulting in enhanced professional human assets and business competitiveness.

The increasing strategic importance of the HRM function to business requires a new framework with both the reach to encompass industries across Hong Kong and the vision to ensure the continuing success of HR practitioners for years to come. In this, the HRM SCS will be aiming to take the HRM profession to new heights while boosting the competencies and the standing of current and future HR practitioners—wherever they work.

[ Chris Davis is project editor, human resources, at HKIHRM. ]

# No Man Is an Island: An Update from New Zealand

By Chris Till

My headline derives from John Donne and dates from 1642. (For probably 45 years, I thought it was a quote from Shakespeare. I hate to think how many people I have misled on this important point of detail.) The words suggest, in terms of that 17th century date, that there may be some truth to another old saying: “Nothing new under the sun” (Ecclesiastes c. 1,000 B.C.).

So why did this come to mind as the potential right title for what I will cover from the past two months in the life of the Human Resources Institute of New Zealand (HRINZ)? Two reasons. One: I had a really good English teacher, Johnny Basil, who clearly beat it into me. (Johnny was also head coach of the school boxing team.) Two: After I had actually reviewed the past few months, it seemed both “right” in a connected way and also slightly ironic. More on this later!

I will cover four key HRINZ developments from the September to November 2016 period:

- 1 HRINZ attendance at the Asia Pacific Federation of Human Resource Management (APFHRM) meeting in Bangkok, Thailand, Oct. 10–14.
- 2 The developing HRINZ relationship with the New Zealand government.
- 3 HRINZ’s presentation at the New Zealand Payroll Practitioners’ Association Conference in Auckland, Nov. 3.
- 4 Attendance at the Business Leaders’ Health and Safety Forum on Oct. 19 at the Beehive in Wellington.

Let’s start with the APFHRM meeting. Wow! New Zealand was at the table with 14 other nations or regions: Australia, Bangladesh, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Laos (observer), Malaysia, Pakistan (applying to join), Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam. (Two countries, Fiji and Papua New Guinea, sadly, could not attend.) Together, these countries are home to 2.15 billion people—or around 30 percent of our world’s population of 7.25 billion.

The second “wow” moment, which also speaks to the “not an island” point, was the synergy of themes that emerged from the national reports delivered by all the different countries. Here are the top five most common themes:

- 1 Talent shortage, talent management, skills mismatches and lack of needed qualifications.
- 2 The drive for productivity and growth.
- 3 Changing work culture.
- 4 The search for new generation leadership.
- 5 Cost pressures.

The match to the mantra of global HR guru Dave Ulrich for HR of “talent, leadership and culture” was spooky.

In terms of the meeting’s content, we talked about new member acquisition (I am proud to say that New Zealand will run with the ball for Pacifica nations), global HR competencies, awards, finances and marketing. We also discussed Peter Wilson from the Australian Human Resources Institute becoming president of the World Federation of People Management Associations and the fact that the presidency of APFHRM is now falling to a country within the Oceania subgroup (Australia, Fiji, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea).

Although the news in Thailand was rightly overshadowed by the impending, sad passing of the Thai king and the very significant uncertainty for the nation, I enjoyed getting up to speed with key themes in the region (mostly via the *Bangkok Post*, “the newspaper you can trust”). These themes included Alibaba Chairman Jack Ma, U.S. President Donald Trump, drugs, digitization impacts, business acquisitions, the Samsung Galaxy Note 7, expanding air routes and links, and, rather nicely, a colorful feature piece on New Zealand that focused on the city of Nelson—“Perhaps because it’s the sunshine region

of New Zealand that Nelson attracts the creative.” No wonder Kiwi tourism is booming!

My time in Bangkok was well spent, highly educational and networking in nature. I’d like to express my thanks to our wonderful Thai hosts, who were friendly, gracious and lovely. I will miss Bangkok, but, coming from New Zealand, I now appreciate our clean air and comparatively unclogged roads (I do know about Auckland) all the more.

Almost all my colleagues at the meeting genuinely expressed a love of New Zealand and a desire to visit and said how lucky we were in our living space, lack of pollution, freedoms and outstanding scenery.

## COLLABORATING WITH NEW ZEALAND GOVERNMENT

So on to our contacts with our government. In a nutshell, we have spent a number of years looking to build relations with Hon. Michael Woodhouse, New Zealand minister for workplace relations and safety. I am pleased to say that we have spent time with him and his team and that we hope to be working collaboratively with them in support of our nation of New Zealand and HRINZ’s profile and influence. I have personally found the minister to be very open to feedback, totally committed to his challenging portfolios, a great listener and question asker, and someone who is very focused on making improvements across the board. In short, I was impressed. Please “watch this space” for future developments. We are also developing positive, ongoing relations with Hon. Louise Upston, a representative in the New Zealand House of Representatives.

## LEARNING FROM CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

On Nov. 3, 2016, I presented “Tuning the Payroll and HR Voice” at the New Zealand Payroll Practitioners’ Association Conference in Auckland. My basic message was that payroll and HR form a critical relationship, that collaboration and mutual respect are essential and that both professions share big digitization challenges.

The Business Leaders’ Health and Safety Forum in October had two outstanding speakers. The first was Woodhouse, who walked the talk, showing his business empathy and understanding as a former CEO in the health sector. The second great speaker was Daniel Hummerdal, a director at Art of Work. Hummerdal is originally from Sweden and now lives in Australia. I cannot recommend enough his positive “learning from success” approach to improving health and safety using positive psychology. HRINZ hopes to work with him in the future.

However, here we come to the potential irony of what was a great and very impactful event.

Twenty minutes in, I noticed that of about 150 people present, around 20 were female. That’s 13 percent female. The audience was made up primarily of leaders of organizations. The last time I checked, New Zealand was 51 percent female. I personally knew a number of the women attending. When I spoke with them, they indicated that they had also noticed this (in a nonjudgmental way, I would emphasize) and added that many of the women attending were not actually CEOs.

So maybe my headline should really be “No one should be an island ... as we are all globally interconnected.”

Chris Till is president of the Asia Pacific Federation of HRM and chief executive of HRINZ.

## Australia Happy Workers



Workers in Tasmania are the happiest at their jobs, according to a new report, *Happy Workers: How Satisfied Are Australians at Work?* Thirty-five percent of Tasmanian employees said they were “very satisfied” with their job, compared with only 28 percent of people in both Western Australia and Victoria. The survey, which was conducted by Curtin University in collaboration with Making Work Absolutely Human, showed that job satisfaction is higher among older workers and those living farther away from major cities. Just over 60 percent of workers in their 70s reported feeling very satisfied with their job overall, compared with only 24 percent of Generation Y, 28 percent of Generation X and 33 percent of Baby Boomers. While pay is associated with higher job satisfaction, that is not the only factor. Those who said they were “very satisfied” with their job overall actually took home a lower average weekly paycheck than those who said they were “satisfied.” The job itself was the biggest factor in overall job satisfaction, followed by pay, job security and job flexibility.

## Hong Kong Developing Job Skills



The majority of Hong Kong employees (77 percent) take responsibility for developing their job skills, rather than relying on their employers. Respondents to a survey by recruitment firm Hays said they use a combination of self-learning and on-the-job experience. Twelve percent look for formal courses to enhance their skills, while only 11 percent rely on their employer.

## India Mandatory Maternity Leave



India increased mandatory maternity leave from 12 to 26 weeks, making it the most generous of all countries that offer paid maternity leave. However, there are concerns that employers will favor male candidates more heavily now to avoid the potential of paying for maternity leave. Paternity leave was not included in the law. The Maternity Benefit Amendment Act covers women in the formal economy whose employers have at least 10 employees. Female government employees already received 26 weeks. The new law also requires companies with 50 or more employees to have a day care center within a certain distance. In a survey of startups, small to medium-sized enterprises, and entrepreneurs, more than 40 percent said they would consider the maternity leave requirements during the hiring process. Approximately 26 percent said they would prefer hiring male employees instead, according to LocalCircles, a citizen engagement platform in India that conducted the poll.

## Japan Corporate Labor Shortage



Japan is facing a labor shortage in the corporate sector, according to the March 2017 tankan survey by the Bank of Japan. The employment index for all industries, among companies of all sizes, was -25, the lowest since February 1992. Japan’s working-age population continues to shrink, and unemployment fell to 2.8 percent in February, the lowest in 22 years. Some companies are turning to factory automation or looking into artificial intelligence possibilities. According to the tankan survey, companies plan to increase their investment in software by 3 percent this year.

## Malaysia Growing the Workforce



The Ministry of Human Resources in Malaysia launched an initiative in March 2017 to boost the country’s skilled workforce to 5 million—an increase of 1 million workers. The Human Capital Strategic Initiative Towards Creating High-Skilled Workforce by 2020 will invest in workers’ education and retraining. “The upskilling of local talent [is] pivotal towards improving social mobility and the well-being of the rakyat [citizen] as a whole,” said Human Resources Minister Datuk Seri Richard Riot Jaem. The ministry is also examining starting salaries across all industries in the country. Starting salaries have not increased much in 20 years, plus the country faces a rise in national youth unemployment.

## Philippines Stronger Labor Protections



A new law in the Philippines bans employers from continually issuing new five-month contracts to workers, which was typically done to avoid paying benefits employees are eligible for at six months. These were known as “555 schemes.” Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III issued the order in March 2017. Other practices that hinder workers’ rights were also banned, including asking employees to sign post-dated resignation letters or minimum wage and welfare benefits waivers. The order also reaffirms the constitutional and statutory right to security of tenure of workers and reinforces the rights of workers to labor standards, self-organization and collective bargaining.

## Singapore Employment Grievance Offices Expanded



Approximately 90 percent of workers in Singapore are now able to take their employment grievances to two government dispute management offices. Previously, only those covered under the Employment Act could take their salary issues to the Ministry of Manpower. Professionals, managers and executives that earned more than S\$4,500 a month had to take complaints to the civil courts instead. Now, the Tripartite Alliance for Dispute Management (TADM) aims to mediate salary-related claims for any income level. A secondary office, the new Employment Claims Tribunal, will also hear disputes. TADM also aims to provide more support in the form of legal advice, job search tools and financial assistance through social programs.

## South Korea Work/Life Balance Efforts



To promote better work/life balance in South Korea, the government is now allowing civil servants to leave work several hours early one day a month, typically a Friday. Government employees usually work until at least 6 p.m., although many put in extra evening hours. The Ministry of Personnel Management said it will also offer incentives to encourage private companies to offer similar programs. The government also recently asked its agencies to ensure that employees get at least nine hours of rest after work and discouraged the use of social media and phone communications with government employees when they’re not at work.

Sources: *HRM Asia*, *CFO Innovation*, Curtin University, LocalCircles, Malaysia Ministry of Human Resources, *Nikkei Asian Review*, Republic of the Philippines Department of Labor and Employment, Singapore Ministry of Manpower, SPH Asia, *The Korea Herald*, *The Japan Times*.

## HR Calendar

### June 18–21, 2017

SHRM Annual Conference & Exposition

New Orleans, La., USA

Website: [annual.shrm.org](http://annual.shrm.org)

### August 21–23, 2017

AHRI National Convention & Exhibition

Sydney International Convention Center

Sydney, Australia

Website: [www.ahri.com.au/national-convention](http://www.ahri.com.au/national-convention)

### September 6–7, 2017

AMEDIRH Annual Conference

Centro Banamex

Mexico City, Mexico

Website: [www.amedirh.com.mx](http://www.amedirh.com.mx)

### November 16, 2017

50th APG National Conference

Portuguese Association of People Management

“Back to People: The Rupture of Paradigms in People Management”

Lisbon, Portugal

Website: [www.apg.pt](http://www.apg.pt)

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#### WORLDLINK

welcomes news stories, announcements of events and ideas for articles. These should be accompanied by a telephone number and e-mail address.

Melanie Padgett Powers

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#### NEXT ISSUE

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