



HR, meet your associations

A look at what's happening with some of the major HR associations across Canada

Associations play a pivotal role in the HR profession. They help practitioners network, stay on top of their games and elevate the profession as a whole. Canadian HR Reporter sat down and talked with the heads of provincial associations from across the country, plus a number of other leading associations. For a list of HR associations, including contact information, see page 20.

DIANE WIESENTHAL

President
Canadian Council
of Human Resources
Associations



In 1992, provincial HR associations recognized the need to collaborate on national issues. The Canadian Council of Human Resources Associations (CCHRA) was formally established four years later, in 1996, but it relied heavily upon the largest provincial association, the HR Professionals Association of Ontario, for support and especially for office space in Toronto.

"When CCHRA was first set up, it was an infant company and needed some strong support from provincial associations," said Diane Wiesenthal, president of CCHRA.

Now the council is gearing

up for its big move from Toronto to Ottawa next month.

"We're a national council. We really should be located in the national capital of Canada. It's a closer alignment to federal government relations, which is key to us, as well as having other national associations located in Ottawa," said Wiesenthal.

With its move to Ottawa, the council also wants to strengthen its government relations strategy and work more as a lobby group for HR. The council will also continue to build its international relationships with other like-minded associations around the world and raise awareness of the CHRP designation on a global scale, said Wiesenthal.

As part of its move to the nation's capital, the council is hiring its first CEO. The council will continue to have three other staff positions — an executive director of professional standards, a communication specialist and an administrative position.

CCHRA relies heavily on volunteers, about 60 in all. The national board of directors consists of representatives from the provincial associations and there's also a professional standards committee, an independent board of examiners and a marketing committee.

The council is the national body responsible for maintaining national core standards for the HR profession and it awards the Certified Human Resources

Professional (CHRP) designation. The council represents more than 33,000 professionals and 16,000 CHRP holders.

Building and strengthening the HR designation is one of CCHRA's main goals over the next year. As part of that process, the council will be working with the business community to ensure the competencies the CHRP requires are relevant and will continue to be relevant in the future, said Wiesenthal.

The national board is also looking at enhancing the designation and perhaps offering a designation specifically for senior HR professionals.

"Longer term, everyone shares the vision that we want to have the best designation in the world for Canadian HR practitioners and we're working towards that goal," said Wiesenthal.

DAVID KNUDSON

President
Human Resources
Institute of Alberta



With a 16-per-cent jump in membership in 2006 and record-breaking attendance, the Human Resources Institute of Alberta (HRIA) is enjoying robust days.

Created in 1984, the group was established "to promote, encourage and maintain a professional standard of practice in the occupational field known as human resources management through the development and certification of practitioners in Alberta."

The HRIA is working hard to become the umbrella HR organization for the province, with local chapters. But provincial collaboration is not the only reason for the jump in numbers, said David Knudson, who became a volunteer president of the HRIA in 2005, citing outreach and marketing initiatives. "I had an aggressive plan. I saw opportunities for growth and to be able to position and market the profession."

The escalations are evident in membership numbers, which have increased from 1,000 in 2005 to 2,600 this year, and recruiting ads, with more than 600 posted online in 2006, a 36-per-cent increase over the previous year.

The CHRP designation has also helped. Last year more than 340 HR professionals wrote the National Knowledge Exam and the National Professional Practice Assessment exams through the HRIA, surpassing the 2005 record of 200.

"It's more than exceeded our expectations," he said. "The designation is seen as valuable now and with its seamless nature, being portable across the country, it's quite desirable. There are more people working in HR who truly want to raise the level of professionalism."

The association launched its first conference last year and

attendance exceeded expectations with more than 450 and a waiting list of 100. This year the HRIA will have capacity for 500 at the Edmonton "Explore the Possibilities" event in April, with high-profile keynote speakers such as David Suzuki.

LES WALDIE

President
British Columbia Human
Resources Management
Association

Back in 2003, the British Columbia Human Resources Management Association (BCHRMA) was running a slight deficit. But revenue has gone from \$1.8 million in 2004 to \$3.3 million this year.

"Certainly we've made great progress on our whole fiscal viability because, if we don't have that, we don't have anything," said Les Waldie, who has served as president since the summer of 2006 and is also vice-president of HR for Northern Health.

The organization has undergone considerable restructuring since 2005 when the volunteer board decided to shift from being operational to strategic, hiring CEO Simon Evans. Most recently it has focused on fiscal viability, membership services and the online newsletter. Membership has risen considerably, from 2,800 in 2004 to a projected 3,660 by the end of the fiscal year in June.

BCHRMA has also done

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