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focus has to be on making things better for our members." A concrete example of that is a new professional development kit called PD in a Box. It's a package of workshop material designed so anyone can give a two-hour presentation on one of 10 HR topics. The package includes a PowerPoint presentation, a facilitator's package, workbooks for participants, place cards, felt pens and evaluation forms.

"One of the challenges is we have chapters all over Ontario," said Greenhalgh. "Generally if we run some kind of professional development, the tendency is to have it in a big location because it gets better attendance. But because two-thirds of our members are outside Toronto, the question is how to provide professional development that chapters require, of an equal quality and calibre as that provided in Toronto?"

With PD in a Box, a local chapter can set up seminars for as few as five people, not have to worry about hiring expensive speakers from Toronto and still be able to deliver quality seminars.

Also in line with its new mission — "to be a thought leader" — the HRPAO has set up a new web portal called HRThoughtLeader.com. Greenhalgh described it as "the go-to site for HR people, not just in Canada but worldwide."

The HRPAO has also ramped up its government advocacy role, particularly with the hiring of a full-time director answering to a committee dedicated to this function. Within the organization itself, the HRPAO has undergone a governance review — an 18-month process looking at "how the association governs itself, the role of various committees, their terms of reference and mandates and directions."

FLORENT FRANCOEUR
President-general director
Ordre des CHRA et CRIA

At the Ordre des CHRA et CRIA, Quebec's association for HR and industrial relations professions, promoting the value of the CHRP designation is at the top of the agenda for the next two years, said president-general director Florent Francoeur.

But unlike the case with other HR associations, the pitch isn't necessarily aimed at members. That's because out of 7,800 members, 6,800 already have the CHRP. The rest are in the process of obtaining the designation. Members must either have the CHRP designation or be working towards it.

Rather, the campaign to raise the profile of the HR professional designation is aimed at business people generally. Relying on research that said business leaders are more likely to watch Quebec's all-news cable le Réseau de l'Information (RDI) and the all-sports cable, le Réseau des Sports (RDS), the Ordre has been buying ad time on these networks to get out its message.

"We want to continue to emphasize the difference between someone who has a CHRP designation and someone who doesn't," said Francoeur. "What we say to the public at large is, 'If you do business with an HR professional, you should be doing business with a CHRP holder. If you are hiring an HR professional, you should be hiring a CHRP.'"

The raising of HR's profile also involves working with the government to contribute the profession's view on policy. Francoeur already sits on the Labour Standards Commission and the Pay Equity Commission and he's also representing the Ordre as the government consults the public on three ongoing files: a review of pay equity legislation, a program addressing work-life balance and a bill on self-employed workers.

"This allows us to voice to the government how pay equity is implemented, from the point of view of an HR professional, or if the government proposes changes to the law around work-life balance, how we as practitioners think these changes will affect organizations," said Francoeur. "We think that's an important role for us, and we're very active in this role."

MERRILL BRINTON
CEO
Saskatchewan Association of Human Resource Professionals

Having spent the last year-and-a-half working to group together the various HR associations in the province, the Saskatchewan Association of Human Resource Professionals (SAHRP) is now looking for an executive director to take charge. At 750 members, the group has reached a critical mass and a volunteer board is no longer effective.

There's a need for someone on the ground on a full-time basis who "we can rely on to follow through and do the research and kick us a bit when we need it," said Merrill Brinton, CEO of SAHRP and head of the Saskatchewan HR practice of consulting firm Meyers Norris Penny.

The mission "to promote and encourage leadership and expertise within HR management through provincial networks and developmental opportunities while supporting professional standards to influence organizational excellence" remains the same for the association, which is looking for someone with either local expertise or someone outside the province who might be appropriate, he said. "We need to step up and do a lot more, from a leadership perspective, helping our members, who are very diverse."

The SAHRP is a CHRP granting body and currently about 40 per cent of members have the designation. Those, along with overall membership, are expected to grow by about 10 per cent, said Brinton.

The Saskatchewan association is also challenged with trying to figure out how, as a smaller organization, it can link nationally on the HR front, he said. "We're not a big player but we have a lot to contribute obviously and a lot to learn from other associations. We look to them for guidance and support as we move forward."

PATRICK CULHANE
President and CEO
Canadian Payroll Association

It pays to pay attention to payroll, said Patrick Culhane, president and CEO of the Canadian Payroll Association (CPA).

"First, consider the metrics of payroll in Canada. There are $660 billion paid every year in wages and benefits by 1.4 million Canadian employers; $200 billion in statutory remittances go to the provincial and federal governments; and $77 billion is paid annually in retirement and health benefits. The numbers are staggering."

To help Canadian companies handle that heavy load, Culhane and the CPA have racked up some impressive metrics themselves. In the last seven years, since the CPA recruited Culhane, a chartered management accountant, it has more than doubled its membership to almost 13,000.

"We're non-profit but we're a profitable $10 million-dollar-a-year organization. So we plow our financial resources back into additional services for members," said Culhane, acknowledging the importance of member education.

The payoff for practitioners who take CPA courses is to learn, first and foremost, how to keep their companies in compliance with the gamut of federal and provincial payroll legislation. However, imparting knowledge of provincial labour or employment standards is also an important CPA aim.

"In larger organizations, payroll tends to report through HR but, in smaller ones, there often is no HR department," said Culhane. "There may be one payroll person who is also handling compliance with labour standards."

And ignorance of how to comply can be costly.

"Up until 2003, if you were late with your payroll remittance to the government, there was a 10-per-cent penalty. It was one of the most onerous penalties in our entire tax regime. However, we worked with the Canada Revenue Agency and did a comparison with the United States, the U.K. and Australia. So now we have a graduated penalty like them; three per cent if you are up to three days late, five per cent under five days, seven per cent under seven days, and then it moves to 10 per cent."

IRIS ALMEIDA-CÔTÉ
CEO
Canadian Pensions & Benefits Institute

Having been in Canada for 45 years, the Canadian Pensions & Benefits Institute (CPBI) is undergoing a major refurbishment. While it has a healthy membership of more than 3,000 and plenty of events, it has lacked a strategic business plan. That is all changing with the arrival of Iris Almeida-Côté, who assumed the newly created position of CEO in 2006. Formerly the director of policy, programs and planning at the Parliamentary Centre in Montreal, she has worked hard to transform the CPBI into a dynamic organization while, at the same time, getting back to basics.

The mandate and mission of

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the institute has always been to promote education and knowledge-sharing through quality programs and networking opportunities. But the new plan is focused on three strategic goals: making CPBI a professionally managed, efficient and effective corporation; offering members quality services to demonstrate the added value of being a member; and making CPBI a recognized brand in the pensions and benefits industry across Canada.

"The focus is on quality education, membership services, defining and harmonizing the brand," she said.

To achieve that mandate, various initiatives have been undertaken, such as raising the institute's profiles focusing on fiduciary responsibilities by setting up financial and auditing systems, moving the office from a small town in Quebec to Montreal, building strategic alliances with other organizations and setting up an intranet system to connect regional boards and councils.

It's also putting greater emphasis on French and English offerings, making web casts an integral part of programs, developing a dynamic website, celebrating volunteers and building a database of experts across Canada who specialize in pensions, benefits and investments.

Areas of particular concern for members, and the CPBI, include the increased retirement age, pension reform, health and wellness, work-life balance, investment opportunities, income trusts and the discussion of national and international trends. These will be addressed at some of the 100 events the institute runs across the country, ranging from regional and national conferences, breakfast forums, training programs and web casts.

LYNN JOHNSTON
President
Canadian Society for Training and Development

Since going national in 2003, the Toronto-based organization that was known back in 1946 as the Ontario Society for Training Directors has seen a 25-per-cent growth in membership. There are now 17 chapters across Canada — with two in British Columbia, two in Alberta, one each in Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick and 10 in Ontario. Still, with 2,000 members, president Lynn Johnston estimates the society could grow by another 1,000.

The profile of members has remained constant over the years. About one-third are vendors and suppliers in the industry. The balance are workplace learning and performance professionals (now the preferred term for training and development professionals) who work inside organizations. Among this latter group, Johnston is seeing an increased interest in professional certification.

"That's an idea whose time has come. Members are acknowledging that we need to see ourselves as a profession," said Johnston. Currently, about 15 per cent of members either have the Certified Training and Development Professional designation or are trying to obtain one. The CSTD's target is to bring that up to 25 per cent by 2008.

One initiative the CSTD recently introduced was Learn at Work Week, a chance for individual organizations to find ways to celebrate learning inside their organizations. Last year, more than 50 organizations took part.

"The whole idea is to give members an opportunity to celebrate what they do," said Johnston. "We're seeing companies hold events to acknowledge new learners or demonstrate the value of training."

The CSTD is preparing to host the 2009 conference for the International Federation of Training and Development Organizations, a Geneva-based world federation of training associations of which the CSTD is a member. It'll be a chance to showcase best practices coming out of Canada and to demonstrate the value of certification, said Johnston.

RICHARD ROUSSEAU
President
HRMS Professionals Association

Quebec and Ontario getting together to meet a common need? As rare as that might be, that's just what two former Montreal and Toronto branches of an international HR management systems association did in September 2005 to form the HRMS Professionals Association (HRMSP).

"Our main goal is to familiarize HR people with technology," said HRMSP president Richard Rousseau. "We had our international connections but there was nothing that was bringing Canadian management systems users, vendors, and consultants together in a room to exchange ideas and experiences. So that is what we do and I am amazed the way things have gone in our first year-and-a-half."

Under the leadership of Rousseau, who is also the head of Montreal-based HR technology firm DLGL, the Ontario-based HRMSP now counts more than 100 corporate members.

"We just had a breakfast session here in Montreal, for example, where we had a panel of major companies including Desjardins and the liquor control authority for Quebec explaining how they implemented an e-recruitment system," said Rousseau.

"We had 48 people sign up for the session and they included directors of recruitment, other senior HR types and some payroll people."

The Toronto chapter is organizing similar events and that has Rousseau thinking growth.

"We have requests now to expand to both Ottawa and Quebec City. So they will come next and then we'll go to the West Coast."

Rousseau said HRMSP's growth indicates the continuing need for a Canadian forum.

"But it doesn't matter what province you are in, the issues of how you computerize the information about your individuals are the same," he said. "The technology to do that is changing so rapidly, and HR people have so much on their plate at the same time, that there's a need to help them decide on what technology and especially how they are going to introduce it to their organization."