

People and **power shift**

What is **happening today**, what is



LARRY STYBEL

What kind of an impact is the changing nature of the work environment having on the HR function? Larry (Laurence) Stybel* shared with us his insights on the role this key function plays in today's corporate world and the direction in which it should evolve to be most effective in

the future. His observations and conclusions are of particular interest, not only because of the innovative approach he takes and the challenges he raises, but also because we should bear in mind that North American trends tend to seep over towards Europe within the space of a few years.

Larry, what have you observed regarding Human Resources attitudes recently?

HR policies and procedures in the 21st century are incongruous, since they remain largely based on 19th century assumptions. First of all, they generally take into consideration only full-time employees of a company. But in the flexible working environment of today, many other types of individuals are concerned: part-time staff, former employees, contingency staff, external consultants who spend a lot of time within the company and so on. So in that respect they are very limited. Secondly, they view HR with a top-down approach exclusively, without taking into account the fact that power has become a two-way channel, and it now moves both top-down and bottom-up.

What do you mean by bottom-up?

Technology has completely changed the balance of power. Take the recent example of someone who almost single-handedly, through his anti-Islamic movie and the distribution power of Youtube, managed to disrupt international politics to the extent of riots and diplomatic incidents. Or take a former employee of a major accounting firm - this is a true story - who was treated with a complete lack of respect and provided with no way of venting her dissatisfactions. She has power and has used it against the company, on employee forums and other digital outlets, to great effect.

So how should Human Resources adapt to factor in this change in the balance of power?

Power goes in waves. At this point, in the US, HR Officers of large corporations normally report to the CFO, so they are in effect an extended arm of the finance function. The focus of their mission thus naturally becomes to reduce costs - sometimes to the point of obsession. Do you know the difference between a good and a great hockey player? A good player focuses on the puck, but a great one focuses on where it is going, not where it is now. The same is true for HR people. And great HR people now recognize that the future of HR lies in alliances with the marketing function. Typically, outplacement should be viewed as a marketing tool and the marketing function should contribute to that budget.

And where does that leave organizations today?

HR fits on both sides of the classic accounting equation: assets = liabilities. In order to make money, a company has to increase assets or decrease liabilities. But it's also a psychological equation. Liability-orientated or pessimistic people are always seeking to reduce costs and risk, because it's a scary world out there. But another approach is to increase assets, for instance by investing in people, to hire more confident and better-trained staff. This is the more optimistic approach. You need both types of people in an organization. At the moment, however, the pessimists are more predominant and the tendency is to decrease liabilities.

Power has become a two-way channel, and it now moves both top-down and bottom-up.

What of the future? Which direction should HR take?

While this imbalance between liability- and asset-based approaches can be viewed as a short-term reaction to the economy - and in some cases costs do indeed need to be cut for the organization to survive - you also have to invest for the future. I am a passionate advocate of the need for a unique HR perspective: the leaders of tomorrow are being hired and trained today. You can't cut your way to greatness. HR needs to find a unique voice for itself, which will only happen through an alliance with marketing. Each individual, whatever the nature of their employment, is a one-person communications shop, who can become an advocate or a detractor. You can find a passionate advocate of your company in a current or former employee, in a consultant, in a temporary recruit,... and so the first thing to do is to look at your working population in a much broader way than is current today.





coming **tomorrow** in the **HR World**

What about the policies and procedures you were mentioning?

They need to be rethought and potentially redesigned to take into account the shift in power to a two-way street. Practical examples might include: giving individuals a choice on certain policies which concern them to improve commitment; implementing alumni programs to help keep the emotional bond with the company intact; making sure departing employees receive outplacement services and constantly focusing on succession planning, which is one aspect where HR can best affect the future. More generally, HR needs in its own right to be perceived as an asset, and no longer stereotyped as the hand servant of the finance function. And as I said earlier, the best way to do that is to keep an eye on where the ball is going, not where it is right now.

The first thing to do is to look at your employee population in a much broader way than is current today.

**Larry Stybel is an entrepreneur, CEO, Board Member, Consultant, Teacher, and the Co-founder of today's Stybel Peabody Lincolnshire, one of Von Rohr & Associates' Partners within the Arbora global network. He received his Doctorate in Organizational Behavior from Harvard University and is a licensed Psychologist, while his areas of expertise include, amongst others, corporate governance, developing leadership potential and retained search.*

*Amongst his other numerous activities, Larry writes a blog called **Platform to Success** in Psychology Today (www.psychologytoday.com/blog/platform-success), which is well worth a visit as it covers a wide range of fascinating career-linked topics ranging from the philosophical to the practical.*

The Arbora network: insights from around the world

Stybel Peabody Lincolnshire is a Member and a Partner of Von Rohr & Associates within Arbora Global Career Partners, the global network of leading providers of outplacement and career management services. Founded in the 1980s, Arbora is present today in 29 countries in the Americas, Europe and Asia-Pacific. Some 50'000 individuals are supported through the network each year, mainly in the context of outplacement programs.

One of the main objectives of the Arbora network is of course to provide Candidates and their Employers with access to international career resources, facilitated by multi-office, multi-country support. Candidates benefit from in-depth local knowledge of markets they may be interested in, since each Arbora Partner firm is owned and managed by experienced, well-established local consultants and teams.

Moreover, another benefit animates this partnership, that of the exchange of experiences within the network, by which Arbora Partners share knowledge, research and best practices around the globe. While this adds value to each firm in the network, it is ultimately the individuals in transition who benefit the most from this pooling of resources, which pushes each local Partner firm to stretch beyond its own boundaries. As a result, Arbora's whole is, as is so often the case, far greater than the sum of its individual parts.

www.arboraglobal.com

The screenshot shows the Arbora website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'Home', 'About Arbora', 'Our services', 'For organisations', and 'For individuals'. Below this is a 'Welcome to the world of Arbora' section with a sub-header 'The global network of leading providers of outplacement and career management services'. The main content area is divided into several sections: 'Navigation' with links to 'Home', 'About Arbora', 'Partner locations', 'Our services', 'Working with us', 'News & case studies', 'For organisations', 'For individuals', and 'Career transition'; 'Contact us' with a link to 'Send us an email or get in touch with your local partner'; 'Partner locations' with a world map and text stating 'Arbora has 27 partners based across the world...and we're growing'; 'News articles' with a featured article 'Our New Zealand Partner Poshan Kean Highlights the key and sometimes hidden benefits equipment delivers to organisations.'; and 'Key services include:' with a list of services such as 'Outplacement - on a one-to-one and group delivery basis and often including extensive support facilities such as research, office and online facilities', 'Partners to national and local government re-employment services', 'Transition support consulting and planning for organisations undergoing restructuring, transformation or downsizing', 'Career assessment, career development and career management', 'Executive coaching', and 'Leadership development'. A link 'Find out more about Arbora service solutions' is also present.

Pragmatically Optimistic

After 20 years in HR functions within multinational organizations, **Kathryne Bonvin-Berzel started to feel the lack of quality time and resources necessary to dedicate to a true interest - people and their potential to excel and develop. Having herself experienced a career break-point and subsequent outplacement support, she felt particularly well-placed to guide Candidates in taking the next step in their careers and lives.**

She feels that in this rapidly-changing economy and competitive job market, people need to have a clear vision of their knowledge and skills, their added value in terms of what they can bring to an organization, while keeping an eye on their personal values and living them most effectively. Joining Von Rohr in May of this year as a Consultant therefore seemed a natural step, and the change of perspective appears to have fulfilled her expectations.



KATHRYNE BONVIN-BERCEL

People need to have a clear vision of their knowledge and skills, their added value in terms of what they can bring to an organization.

Kathryne's experience in vastly different sectors ensures that she has dealt with many professional environments that a Candidate might be confronted with. This is also true of the range of roles she has occupied, from managing HR operational activities and strategic projects to engaging with line managers and employees in the implementation of people strategies and employee well-being initiatives, expatriate management, coaching and mentoring.

A self-professed generalist, Kathryne holds an Associate Degree in Business Administration from Fisher College in Boston (1985), is a Certified Trainer

in Talent Development by "Global Novations" (2008) and a Certified Analyst of the Predictive Index (P.I.) assessment tool (1996). Her multi-cultural background also helps her to connect to people of all origins, and her fluency in English, French and Hungarian represents a definite plus in communicating. Her advice to Candidates? Keep a sense of perspective at all times and think positively - tomorrow is another day.

New dynamics through office redesign

The redesign of the Von Rohr & Associates website (www.vonrohr.net) quite naturally led to undertake a similar transformation of the real-life work environment available for our Candidates in career transition. Just as the new, improved website has increased efficiency and user comfort, so has the new office organization and layout, generating positive feedback in terms of conviviality, and perfor-

mance. Candidates can now enjoy the widespread view from the terrace over Geneva in the shade of the installed awning, with evergreen laurel shrubs enhancing the entire effect. Transparent hanging partitions, provide Candidates with greater privacy and discretion in their activities, and 10 new workplaces have been set up in Geneva. In Lausanne, the new workshop space fosters enhanced interaction and efficiency.



VON ROHR & ASSOCIATES S.A.

47, avenue Blanc
CH - 1202 Genève
Tel. +41 22 901 33 40
Fax +41 22 901 33 41
info@vonrohr.net

9, avenue de Beaumont
CH - 1012 Lausanne
Tel. +41 21 321 12 50
Fax +41 21 321 12 51
info@vonrohr.net

Von Rohr & Associates S.A.

Career Life-Cycle Management®

www.vonrohr.net

www.arboraglobal.com