Global HR Best Practices: Maximizing Innovation, Effectiveness and Efficiency in HR

A Collection of White Papers

- Global Applicability of HR Practices
- Global HR Information Systems
- Global Innovation And Knowledge Sharing In HR

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Introduction

The combination of increasing global presence, pressures to reduce costs, and innovations in information technology have resulted in a perfect storm challenging the delivery of HR within multinational companies (MNC’s). HR information technology enables firms to squeeze costs through standardization of processes, yet legal, cultural, and economic differences across borders requires customization of those same processes. In addition, both efficiency and effectiveness of HR processes often stem from innovation and knowledge sharing within the global HR function. This sponsor meeting will highlight global HR research conducted by Cornell, Insead, Cambridge, and Erasmus Universities regarding how MNC’s are managing the efficiency, effectiveness, and innovation of HR processes. A combination of professors from the multi-university research team and HR executives will present best practices in global HR.

The CAHRS graduate research assistants have worked over the course of the semester, with the generous support of CAHRS sponsor companies, to prepare this series of white papers examining current issues in the practice of global HR. The papers take account of a wide range of both academic- and practitioner-based literature on the subject as well as emerging key trends from recent conferences.

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Global Applicability of HR Practices
As corporations continually expand across an increasingly global business environment, they strive to find new and ever more effective ways through which they can improve their competitive positions. In recent years, the relentless march of globalization and technical advance has begun to threaten, and, in some cases, whittle away many of the sources of competitive advantage that drive firm performance. As a result, MNCs have come to view their employees—as well as the human resources systems and practices that support them—as an essential component of securing sustainable competitive advantage.

The question then that has occupied many researchers and practitioners alike is how sustainable competitive advantage can be gleaned from a workforce characterized by sometimes vastly differing contextual contingencies. Any attempt to find resolution invariably leads to at least an implicit debate about whether HR practices can be generalized across all contingencies based on a “common logic of industrialism” (McGaughey & De Cieri, 1999) or whether these contingencies—e.g., culture, institutional structures, education levels, etc.—necessitate a formulation of HR policy and practice that is unique to the environment in which it is implemented. This paper aims to analyze the key determinants of HR applicability and effectiveness on a global scale and argues that many factors limiting global HR practice diffusion can be overcome through the effective management of organizational culture.

Global HR Information Systems
Introducing new technology into the workplace presents both opportunities and challenges. HR Information Systems (HRIS) have the potential to transform HR into a more efficient and strategic function by allowing HR to move beyond simple administrative tasks to strategic applications (Palframan, 2002). However, while HRIS are the norm rather than the exception in national organizations, HR has not transformed. Globalization is forcing HR to expand its horizons, perspectives and use of technology. This has lead to the introduction of global HRIS in a number of multinational organizations and different HRIS opportunities and challenges have emerged. This paper will address several of the new opportunities and challenges using recent company examples where possible and takes a quick look at the possible transformation of HR given global HRIS.

Global Innovation And Knowledge Sharing In HR
As human resource management evolves into an ever-increasing means of competitive advantage for multinational corporations (MNC’s) greater importance is being placed on a corporation’s ability to manage and share human resource innovations. This paper discusses the concept of knowledge management (KM) as it pertains to a firm’s ability to share innovative HR practices from one HR function to another across both local and international boundaries. In order to leverage HR knowledge corporations must have a clear understanding of how intellectual, social, organizational, and human capital as well as different geographic regions and different business strategies, impacts creating and sharing HR innovation across MNC’s. This paper will address each of these issues accordingly.
As corporations continually expand across an increasingly global business environment, they strive to find new and ever more effective ways through which they can improve their competitive positions. In recent years, the relentless march of globalization and technical advance has begun to threaten, and, in some cases, whittle away many of the sources of competitive advantage that drive firm performance. As product markets expand and costs of entry into markets decrease, many within the business and academic realms have come to realize “that sustained competitive advantage arises more from a firm’s internal resource endowments and resource deployments that are imperfectly imitable than from the firm’s product market position” (Lado & Wilson, 1999).

As a result, MNCs have come to view their employees—as well as the human resources systems and practices that support them—as an essential component of securing sustainable competitive advantage. This mindset is predicated on the resource-based view of the firm, which contends that, in a heterogeneous environment, those resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable drive a firm’s rise to a superior competitive position. Through the interactions of HR practitioners and firm-specific systems and processes, firms can create a condition that generates above-normal returns and is protected from imitation by causal ambiguity and complexity. That is, rival firms can see what is happening but find it impossible to replicate or purchase, leaving the high-performance work organization with a sustainable advantage within a given market.

However, as the requirement of heterogeneity suggests, just as resources and their associated responses differ between firms, they can also differ within firms, especially in the case of MNCs. The question then that has occupied many researchers and practitioners alike is how sustainable competitive advantage can be gleaned from a workforce characterized by sometimes vastly differing contextual contingencies. Any attempt to find resolution invariably leads to at least an implicit debate about whether HR practices can be generalized across all contingencies based on a “common logic of industrialism” (McGaughey & De Cieri, 1999) or whether these contingencies—e.g., culture, institutional structures, education levels, etc.—necessitate a formulation of HR policy and practice that is unique to the environment in which it is implemented.

**Determinants of Divergence and Convergence**

A review of the extant literature on global HR and its international and cross-cultural applicability reveals a few key determinants influencing the ultimate effectiveness of HR practices across national boundaries as well as the differentiation of those practices across various localities: national culture, institutional factors (e.g., labor-market and other regulation), labor-force characteristics, and the presence of expatriates. While the level of operation of these factors is, for better or worse, often constrained to the realm of “micro” or “macro”, several operate at both, or alternatively, between these distinctions within a “meso” level.
Micro- and macro-level factors are not isolated. Rather, they interact with each other and are manifested in meso-level processes (Adapted from McGaughey & De Cieri, 1999: 245).

These meso-processes are based on the idea that micro- and macro-level factors influence one another and cannot be separated as cleanly as one would first perceive. Rather, micro-level influences—for instance, those work preferences held by the top management team—can influence international, macro-level HR policies such as the adoption of a compensation or performance evaluation system. This interaction would function within a meso-level process such as the design of a unique reward system that aligns with the previously adopted macro-level policy (McGaughey & De Cieri, 1999). What is key in this distinction of levels is not so much the levels themselves, but rather the recognition that processes and decisions occurring at these levels can and often do affect each other. Thus, any consideration of the convergence-divergence debate must take into account the subtleties and complexities of process interaction within and across multiple levels of analysis. As Quintanilla and Ferner (2003: 364) assert, “this suggests the need for less emphasis on grand tendencies and greater attention to how complex processes work themselves out in particular situations, often displaying elements of both convergence (in some respects) and divergence (in others).”

National culture. Much of the argument surrounding the divergence-convergence debate centers on the issue of national culture and its effects on the viability of HR practices within a given realm of operation. One theory regarding the interaction of national culture and human resource management (HRM) practices posits that greater cultural distance between two entities will negatively affect the transfer and acceptance of HR practices from an MNC to a local subsidiary while another suggests that, when faced with a large cultural distance from a foreign subunit, corporations will seek to conform to local management customs (Gamble, 2003).

Substantial support for each of these postulates is present in the existing literature on national culture and the ability of HR practices to be implemented successfully across such cultures. Receiving the most attention, and most debate, is the former. Beginning with Hofstede and his finding that “organizations are culture-bound” (1980: 372), much research and debate has focused on whether the organization actually matches this conclusion (or, alternatively, whether organizational culture serves to overpower at least some cultural norms associated with a particular nation) as well as its implications.

One of the more interesting contributions to the debate is offered by Sparrow et al.’s 1994 study of CEOs and HR managers from twelve countries worldwide. After distributing surveys and conducting a cluster analysis, Sparrow and colleagues identified five clusters of countries, three of which were populated by only one country (Sparrow, et al., 1994: 278-279):

- **Anglo-Saxon Cluster**: United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and the United States, Germany, Italy
- **Latin Cluster**: Brazil, Mexico, Argentina
The identification of these clusters lends credence to the assertion that significant differences based on national culture create differential effects with regard to the efficacy of HRM practices enacted by MNCs. Indeed, this was found to be the case. Further analysis revealed that, in spite of differences significant enough to warrant categorization into distinct cultural clusters, there were certain practices—performance management items, resourcing items (i.e., recruitment, training, workforce size management), and communication and corporate responsibility—for which convergence across clusters was present. The fact that these convergences in HRM exist in spite of divergent national cultures indicates that although variance occurs through mechanisms such as acceptance of free market capitalism, levels of individualism and collectivism, and the prevalence of hierarchical societal structures, there is a substantial amount of common ground upon which international HRM can rest, especially when other factors moderating the effectiveness of HRM practices in foreign locales are considered.

Institutional factors. Also vital to an assessment of the degree of divergence or convergence existing within international HRM is the consideration of country-specific factors arising from embedded, institutionalized systems of labor within host countries. These institutional factors include the breadth and pervasiveness of labor legislation and labor organizations, the basis of the financials system and investment activity, education and other training systems, the prevalence of social welfare systems, and the degree of organizational autonomy (Sparrow & Hiltrop, 1997).

Most prevalent in European countries (not including the UK) and Asian societies, these factors place some of the greatest concrete constraints, sometimes crippling, upon the implementation of HR policies and practices within foreign subsidiaries of MNCs. In this regard, Sparrow & Hiltrop offer the differing examples of Greece and Denmark and their implementation of European Union (EU) labor legislation. In the case of Denmark, where most companies were already above and beyond the policies applied by the EU, HR managers were free to disperse and embed practices in line with business objectives. In contrast, their Greek counterparts found themselves relegated to a reactive role characterized by an all-encompassing focus on getting their organizations in line with the new legislation (Sparrow & Hiltrop, 1997). Additionally, previously institutionalized expectations that are no longer in operation within a host country may have indirect effect on the ability of HR managers to implement international HRM practices—e.g., lingering remnants of state socialism in China have been cited as a major inhibitor in the diffusion of global HRM within the country (Gamble, 2003).

Labor-force characteristics. Labor force characteristics—e.g., general training and education levels and the demographic composition of the national workforce—may also have significant effect upon the diffusion and eventual convergence of international HRM practices. While labor-force characteristics are not “pure” factors (in the sense that they are generally a product of national culture and institutional factors), the potential they hold to influence decision-making and the implementation of global HRM practices at a national level is substantial. Besides differences in education and training that affect recruitment and retention practices, perhaps the most pervasive influence such characteristics have on the diffusion of common HRM practices is manifested through age composition of the workforce.

For instance, Gamble’s (2003) study of StoreCo, a UK-based retailer makes note of educational and age differences among employees in its domestically based divisions and those in its China-based subsidiary, DecoStore. While 18 percent of employees in its UK stores are over the age of 50 and the average employee age is 35, its Chinese stores employ a workforce with an average age between 27 and 28; beyond this, the age limit for employment is set at 45 (Gamble, 2003).
In interpreting the reasons behind these differences, Gamble highlights the interplay between institutional factors and national-cultural mindsets in creating a set of workforce characteristics that, itself, requires a distinct response from HRM practitioners in the company’s employ. Key in creating these differential labor-force characteristics are variations in educational levels—in the UK, many employees have significant experience and intimate product knowledge that creates returns for an HR system encouraging employment past the age of 50. Conversely, in China, company recruits lack that experience and knowledge. In addition, national-cultural norms held by employees suggested that older workers would be less physically capable and less adaptable than their younger counterparts. (Gamble, 2003: 378). Thus, as a result of labor-force characteristics a HRM structure different from the in the UK emerged.

Presence of expatriates. Also critical in determining the propensity of global HRM practices to be accepted and implemented at the national level is the presence of expatriates within the subsidiary firm. While the variations that can occur with regard to control levels are limitless, the most prolific method of exercising parent-company control in foreign subsidiaries appears to be through the use of expatriate managers. Indeed, the presence of expatriate managers has been found to increase the similarity of HRM practices between the subsidiary and parent (Rosenzweig & Nohria, 1994) by encouraging stricter adherence to guidelines set by the MNC.

Additionally, expatriates also function in a communicative role within the subsidiary and “spread explicit knowledge through such means as the introduction and disseminations of employee handbooks, training manuals, and standard operating procedures” while tacitly demonstrating a preferred work style to local employees (Gamble, 2003: 374). Last, regular and close communication in those locations where they are present has been determined to reduce the differences between local HRM and the parent company (Rosenzweig & Nohria, 1994), thus lending support for the potential global applicability of HRM practices set by the MNC.

The Moderating Role of Organizational Culture

Although the role played by national culture, institutional factors, labor-force characteristics and the presence of expatriates is undoubtedly significant, the role of organizational culture is perhaps the largest determinant of the global applicability of global HRM practices. By reconsidering the findings of Hofstede (1980) on the importance of local isomorphisms in terms of effect size, Gerhart & Fang found that the role of country differences in determining the applicability of HRM practices was smaller than was previously thought. It, in fact, accounts for only a small amount of variance in HRM practice and holds little predictive value with regard to which practices are employed (2005: 979).

Instead, Gerhart & Fang conclude that organizational culture explains more—about twice as much—about the structure of HRM practices within affiliates than country-based distinctions (2005: 981). This conclusion is supported by results from Rosenzweig & Nohria, who determined that affiliates that are founded by the MNC, not acquired, “are not only relatively less like local firms at the time of founding, but also persist in their difference” (1994: 243). Given that
organizational culture is the primary driver of the structure, acceptance, and efficacy of HRM practices, greenfield affiliates start with an advantage in the adoption of globally conceived HRM—they lack the necessity to overcome a previously existent organizational culture flavored and influenced by local isomorphisms.

The primacy of organizational culture’s role is again supported by findings in which the presence and effectiveness of various HRM practices directly contradicts the expectations created through national isomorphisms. For instance, Gamble (2003) reports that pay differentials between frontline employees and professional staff in a China-based retailer were higher than in its UK-based parent in spite of China’s history of state socialism and its associated national-cultural and institutional remnants. Additionally, a flat organizational hierarchy and open management style were used with great success and acceptance by local employees in spite of national differences that would predict otherwise (Gamble, 2003). Thus, while local isomorphisms can and do operate to negatively affect the applicability of globally conceived HRM practices at the level of the national subsidiary, the internal organizational culture of the affiliate can mitigate and, in fact, supersede many of these local effects.

Implications and Practice

The importance of organizational culture’s role in determining the applicability of HRM practices has major implications for practitioners, especially considering their relative inability to control many of the other factors that influence the national effectiveness of such. While national culture, institutional features, and labor-force characteristics are in place and relatively stable, both the strong influence of organizational culture and the fact that this influence can be controlled by HR managers within a MNC create a situation in which proactive action by managers can lead to the successful dissemination and effective use of HRM practices as desired by the parent company.

According to a report by Development Dimensions International, the majority of international organizations are taking steps towards employing HRM practices that are consistent across all locations (Rioux, et al., 2006). The report indicates that practitioners in the field have taken several actions in trying to create cultural consistency:

- Communicated to all locations about a common corporate culture.
- Allowed local cultures to maintain their identity in the context of corporate culture.
- Established common systems (e.g., accounting, marketing, MIS).
- Provided management with education outlining how the company does business.
- Created an organizational mission with input from all locations.
- Created a written strategy outlining the corporate culture.

(Rioux, et al., 2006: 3)

By applying these precepts to their own international HRM efforts, HR managers can strengthen the influence of organizational culture and with it, their ability to withstand the pressures of local influence.

While organizational culture does provide a powerful avenue through which HRM practices can be consistently applied to operations in foreign countries, HR practitioners must also realize when coercive isomorphisms—i.e., those conventions that literally cannot be avoided such as employment legislation and the presence of works councils—force deviation from a consistent practice and respond to them accordingly. Especially as the EU grows in economic power and member countries strive to come into compliance with existing legislation, it is important that HR managers have both the correct skills and approach to deal with labor regulations that are unheard of in the United States. Managed properly, however, the organization can actually gain significant benefit from such interactions.

For instance, Rabobank, a large multinational bank based in the Netherlands, has found that being required to make use of works councils has actually had positive consequences for their operations throughout Europe (Ladika, 2005). While initially viewed apprehensively, the use of works councils has improved employee buy-in into the decision-making process, provided the company with a lucid picture of what is occurring at many levels throughout the organization, and helped to ensure consistent communication across all employee groups and locations. The result is an increase in trust of the organization among employees (Ladika, 2005). The trust and consistent communication encouraged by works councils, in turn, strengthen the organizational culture at the national level and thus, provide extra room for maneuverability on the part of HR managers.

Given the importance of managing organizational culture as well as the significant role expatriate employees play in that process, effectively managing the expatriate workforce should remain a top priority for MNCs. As research has demonstrated (Rosenzweig & Nohria, 1994; Gamble, 2003), expatriates serve as a vital link between the parent company and the foreign subsidiary, especially with regard to the communication and dissemination of organization-wide directives. Thus, effective management of selecting, training, and retaining expatriates is essential.

Indispensable in the selection of employees for foreign assignments is an assessment of personality. As James Eyring, Dell computer’s director of learning and development for Asia, asserts, “You really need not only a set of skills that your company values, but the right approach toward dealing with people in a completely different culture. And often, personality is the key to success” (Silverman, 2006). Citing that the actual location of an expatriate assignment has little effect on its eventual success or failure, personality truly emerges as a primary driver of success. In order to accurately assess personality, organizations should employ available personality tests for potential expatriates while taking note of prior job performance as well as competency assessments. Additionally, acquiring HR staff with experience in international assignments helps to ensure that expatriates are matched well with their respective assignments (Silverman, 2006).

Another key task for HR is managing organizational culture in order to ensure the success of expatriate employees on assignment. For instance, national culture may dictate a patriarchal society in which women do not traditionally take on roles within the business world. However, by managing the organizational culture of the foreign subsidiary in such an environment, MNCs can help ensure success even in the face of prevailing national-cultural norms. To achieve this, MNCs should provide their expatriate employees with as much information as possible at the start of their assignments as well as training specific to the
cultural environment into which the employee is entering. For a woman expatriate taking a position in a patriarchal culture, this could include “extensive, gender-specific cross-cultural training” (Ramirez, 2006). Additionally, the MNC and the HR department should work hard to establish the credibility of the new expatriate employee within the foreign affiliate (Ramirez, 2006).

The last major challenge facing HR in MNCs is retaining returned expatriate employees (repatriates) and ensuring that the organization capitalizes on the experience and knowledge acquired during foreign assignments. As employees return, they often look to make upward moves due to their improved understanding of the organization. If these opportunities don’t exist, they are likely to leave and take their knowledge, along with the potential benefits it offers to future expatriates, with them (Tyler, 2006). In order to avoid this situation, employers should establish clear expectations of the assignment as well as “conduct post-assignment career planning before the individual leaves” (Tyler, 2006: 99). Other suggestions include providing repatriation assistance in the form of help with relocation back to the home country.

By following these general guidelines—leveraging the power of organizational culture at the national level to create consistency across all operations, recognizing and responding to coercive isomorphisms, and successfully managing the expatriate workforce—MNCs can maximize the utility they receive from their global HRM practices while moving toward the uniform application of such practices across all units of the organization.

Conclusion

Research has demonstrated that the applicability of globally conceived HRM practices at the level of the nationally-based firm is influenced by several factors including the institutional structure of the host country, labor-force characteristics, the presence of expatriates, and national culture. Perhaps the greatest impact within the subject of global HR, however, comes from the realization that national culture, which often dominates consideration of the applicability of parent-company HRM practices abroad, is not the primary determinant of HRM practice acceptance and effectiveness. As Sparrow & Hiltrop elucidate, “the ‘culture-bound’ perspective runs the gauntlet between generalizability and stereotyping and fails to consider the equally pervasive impact of both individual differences and organizational choice over resource development” (1997: 215).

Rather, HR professionals possess a unique opportunity to tailor HRM practices within their respective organizations to support the goals of the entire organization. While anecdotal evidence of convergence between HRM practices is present, divergence among practices, especially in the presence of coercive isomorphisms does exist and will continue to do so. However, convergence of HRM practices will likely increase with time, as outlined by Sparrow et al. (1994):

- As markets continue to shift towards a greater service orientation, firms across all countries are likely to find it beneficial to empower their employees and create egalitarian environments in which employees can utilize their knowledge through involvement and participation in business decisions and workplace tasks.
- Work practices will continue to become more flexible as the skills and abilities necessary for work change and decision making becomes less centralized throughout organizations.
- Rewards practices will converge toward more performance-based compensation with greater sharing of rewards and risks among all members of organizations.
- As workers become more valuable to organizations because of increased reliance on employee knowledge for business success, the costs of losing employees will increase.
Consequently, greater formal attention will be paid to the selection and retention of employees. Organizations will continue to increase the clarity and transparency with which they communicate to employees about organizational goals in order to further empower their workforce and ensure that employee decisions align with the objectives of top management. (Sparrow, et al., 1994: 293-295)

As the cases of the adoption of a flat organizational hierarchy and performance-based pay in formerly socialist-based Chinese business structure indicate, the effective management of organizational culture at the firm level for foreign subsidiaries can lead to the adoption of HRM practices in line with those being used in the rest of the world. By taking account of differing circumstances in foreign firms, but realizing that those differences are not the most significant determinants of what will and will not work in a specific location, HR professionals will then be able to maximize returns both at the subsidiary level and for the global MNC as a whole.
Works Cited


**Abstract:** This paper addresses the transfer of a British-owned retail firm’s HRM practices from a domestic location to a store in China. A key focus is the extent to which the firm’s parent-country HRM practices have in fact been transferred to the Chinese stores. The role of expatriate managers and factors affecting HRM practice transferability are also explored.


**Abstract:** In a reassessment of a 1980 study by Geert Hofstede, the authors assess the relative importance of national culture with respect to other factors in determining the worldwide applicability of nationally conceived human resource management practices. Special attention is given to the role of organizational culture.


**Abstract:** This book focuses on the role of national culture in determining management structures in foreign affiliates. Using the concept of the “culture-bound” organization, Hofstede argues that American management theories are not universally applicable to foreign organizations.


**Abstract:** This paper explores the impact of works councils on the operations of a large, Netherlands-based, multinational bank. Beginning with a discussion of divergent views surrounding works councils, the paper then examines the positive impacts the councils have had on employee buy-in to business decisions and communication throughout the company.


**Abstract:** This article explores the potential of human resource systems to help or hinder the development and utilization of organizational competencies from the perspective of the resource-based view. The authors consider managerial, input-based, transformational, and output-based competencies as well.


**Abstract:** This paper tackles the subject of whether organizations are converging with respect to macro-level HRM yet maintaining nationally-based differentiation at the micro level. Four modes of convergence-divergence are discussed as is the role of the level of analysis in assessing whether convergence or divergence actually exists.

**Abstract:** This overview of a special issue of the International Journal of Human Resource Management considers the convergence-divergence debate in the context of institutional complexities inherent in multinational corporations. Key in the paper is a discussion of factors which may simultaneously converge and diverge in different respects.


**Abstract:** Given a general increase in the number of women accepting international assignments, this article examines the implications of sending female expatriate employees to work in countries characterized by male-dominant cultures. According to the author, HR should work to provide female expatriate employees with as much information as possible up front in order to avoid any surprises when international assignments begin. Also, the importance of presenting the female expatriate as a wholly qualified professional from the very beginning of the assignment is discussed.


**Abstract:** This executive summary presents an overview of the key findings of a survey administered by DDI to 206 international and domestic organizations worldwide regarding their human resource management practices and the influences that affect them. Among the subjects considered are the general priorities of HR departments, consistency of implementation and associated challenges, corporate culture, and international assignments.


**Abstract:** This study of 249 US affiliates of foreign-based multinational corporations (MNCs) finds that the degree of similarity to local practices is significantly influenced by the method of founding, dependence on local inputs, the presence of expatriates, and the extent of communication with the parent company. The authors conclude that HRM practices within MNCs are strongly influenced by country distinctions, lending support to the argument that HRM practices are differentiated among a MNC’s component organizations.


**Abstract:** Increasing numbers of expatriate work assignments along with a decrease in the length of those assignments are forcing global companies to re-examine selection methods for expatriate workers. With the hope of finding employees that can get up to speed in a new culture and become productive quickly and consistently, companies must take factors such as awareness of cultural subtleties, family constraints, and personality into account while limiting the influence of company politics and the tendency of managers to make “gut decisions” when selecting personnel for work overseas. According to the author, the primary, and most effective way to achieve this feat, is testing accompanied by the presence of HR professionals familiar with expatriate work.

**Abstract:** This paper explores the influences that have shaped the nature of human resource management in a European context with special focus on cultural and institutional factors, differences in business structure and systems, and factors relating to the roles and competence of human resource management professionals. The authors assert that researchers and practitioners should focus less on national differences and more on the explanation and impact of factors that result in distinctive national patterns of human resource management.


**Abstract:** In this study, the authors cluster analyze data collected from a worldwide survey of CEOs and HR managers to determine distinct cultural clusters affecting the composition of HR strategy at a national level. They conclude that convergence among HR practices is occurring, yet indicate that clear divergences simultaneously exist with respect to specific themes within the practice of human resource management.


**Abstract:** In this article, key aspects of retaining employees returning home from expatriate assignments are considered. Beginning with a discussion of why many repatriate employees leave their organizations, solutions, which include pre-assignment planning, ongoing communication, and mentoring, are covered in detail.
Introducing new technology into the workplace presents both opportunities and challenges. HR Information Systems (HRIS) have the potential to transform HR into a more efficient and strategic function by allowing HR to move beyond simple administrative tasks to strategic applications (Palframan, 2002). However, while HRIS are the norm rather than the exception in national organizations, HR has not transformed. Globalization is forcing HR to expand its horizons, perspectives and use of technology. This has lead to the introduction of global HRIS in a number of multinational organizations and different HRIS opportunities and challenges have emerged. Will HR transformation finally follow?

**HR Information Systems - HRIS**

HR Information Systems provide HR with the opportunity to become a more efficient and strategic function by standardizing the majority of the organization’s HR processes, improving the quality and speed of available information and improving services to employees (CIPD, 2005). These changes form the basis of a highly competitive organization.

When planning for a HRIS, the organization must outline its overall business strategy, system goals and objectives, critical success factors and the type of data it aims to have. It is this outline that begins to shape the HRIS. Strategic thinking is the real driver of HRIS – not technology (Greengard, 1995). It is imperative that the outline incorporate a degree of flexibility to allow for new developments in the organization, business environment, technology, or management thinking (The Conference Board, 2002). If designed correctly, the system manages employee data in line with how the organization is managed; hence the need for a multinational organization to implement a global HRIS.

The initial discussion of a global HRIS differs from one of a national HRIS in that the discussion must include all potentially affected countries, cultures and political systems. These elements cannot be ignored and make the HRIS truly global.

**Benefits of a Global HR Information System**

Beyond the benefits realized by a “standard” national HRIS, a global HRIS can put vast amounts of multinational employee data to strategic use. Ideally, the global database is automatically updated by the local databases ensuring data is not only inputted correctly, but only once. By applying consistent standards for data management, global HRIS reporting becomes more accurate and streamlined as all of the decision makers receive and have access to the same information. This information can then be used for in-depth analyses to help HR and the organization make better, more informed decisions.

By applying a consistent process for capturing and maintaining employee specific data (job, position and qualifications (KSAs)), the global HRIS can be used to identify, plan and budget for employee training, succession planning and expatriate assignments. As the “war on talent” continues to loom, a multinational organization with a global HRIS can very quickly and easily discover the right person to fill a specific position. Having the ability to locate the best qualified employee regardless his or her location is a competitive advantage. Additionally, designing the system to identify which employees are interested in overseas assignments will also make the expensive and time-consuming expatriate process quicker and easier. Colgate-Palmolive’s global HRIS contains specific information on each manager’s experience or awareness of different cultures (Anonymous, 2003).
Using the HRIS to think locally, but compensate globally – compensation can be applied fairly across the globe while still being aware of and understanding differences in compensation for similar jobs in various countries (Insight Consulting Partners, 2004). Compensation users are able to review plans in local and additional currencies and languages. A global HRIS can also provide compensation guidelines and help documentation either on or off-line to assist employees in understanding their compensation package and to assist the manager with award decisions and policies (Vernon, 2006). Cadbury Schweppes has incorporated a global HRIS that provides each manager with the capability to toggle a compensation model from the direct reports screen and complete planning for each of their direct or indirect reports. The HRIS is then able to immediately show the impact on local and global budgets and expenditures.

From another quantitative perspective, the organization is able to quickly assess costs when planning for a new department or project regardless of the employees or countries involved (Insight Consulting Partners, 2004). A global HRIS should be able to identify different currencies and exchange rates, providing a final cost figure in any currency. Professional Marketplace, a global database of IBM's talent, is similar to this concept. The database helps IBM ensure that it does not send an overqualified employee to a job that could be filled by an employee who costs less. The issue is especially critical for IBM's 60,000 consultants, who bill by the hour. And since the system includes all of the lower-cost employees in India and Brazil, it should also help guarantee that if a job can be performed in that country at a lower cost, it will be (Kirkpatrick, 2005). From a qualitative perspective, the organization is able to quickly assess current employee availability and their qualifications for staffing the new department or project regardless of the employee’s location. Overall, planning becomes more accurate and decisions become more transparent (Vernon, 2006).

But, the benefits of a global HRIS go beyond the ability to analyze and use employee data. The system encourages geographically diverse operations to share ideas and innovations (Miller, 2004). It can also create an element of cultural cohesion and closeness for employees – especially those within the expatriate community (Insight Consulting Partners, 2004). Employees across the organization, regardless of location, will feel more connected to each other and will have a single point of contact.

**Pitfalls of a Global HR Information System**

After spending a significant amount of time and money to identify the best HR processes to standardize, selecting the right vendor to use, training employees and finally implementing the global HR Information System, it is very probable that the system will be under used. Many HR departments admit to only using 25–50% of the available features in their current systems (Ryder, 2005). There are two main reasons why an employee will not use the global HRIS to its full extent – lack of knowledge and difficulty of use. Some employees will not entirely understand how to use the system (technical know-how) or realize its potential. While this may be a training and communication issue, difficulty in using the system due to complex or ineffective user interfaces will make alternatives to the system more attractive – even it means more “manual” work for the employee. Often the organization is unaware that the system usage rate is low, especially if the organization is not monitoring employee usage and generated data reports.

Employees may genuinely understand how to use the global HRIS to its full potential and they may find it easy to do so from a user’s perspective, but local technological issues can cause global system problems or even failure. Organizations often take for granted the technological equipment and capabilities they have and forget that not all areas in the world can sustain similar technology. Additionally, the vendor may not support all of the countries the system is being implemented in leaving
employees to fend for themselves. Organizations may also find that by the time the system is implemented, the vendor has already come out with a new version to make the just implemented system obsolete.

Quite simply, a global HRIS not rooted in the global business strategy will fail – as strategy drives the technology it is imperative to align the two. HR processes drawn out from the organization’s strategy should not only be global, but scalable, standardized, and repeatable. One trap organizations often fall into is over-engineering the global HR processes.

“The HR function’s limited knowledge of technology is an obstacle to creating and implementing a workable HR technology strategy” (Palframan, 2002). The severe lack of IT skills among HR professionals, not only in countries that have limited technological capabilities but also within the U.S., will make it more difficult to have even a basic global HRIS. Furthermore, the shortage of trained IT experts, programmers and other support personnel in many countries may discourage the creation and implementation of a global HRIS or be a large part of its failure. Even maintaining the global system involves a complicated process and expert knowledge for testing and applying system updates/upgrade due to around the clock operations, varying time zones and possibly different timing for country-specific regulatory updates.

While it may sound simple, achieving data accuracy with a global HRIS can be extremely difficult. Before the organization can hope data entered into the system is correct, it must agree to common terms and definitions (Frauenheim, 2006). For example, a seemingly straightforward term – headcount – is often a lengthy battle between Finance and HR. Factor in differing international standards for full-time, part-time and contract employees, the struggle for data accuracy across the globe becomes clear. Even decisions in choosing whether to use the term “family name”, “given name” or “last name” in setting up data fields will be a challenge. The terms may mean different things to an organization’s employees depending upon their location and therefore the data fields could be used differently. Thoughts at a recent IHRIM Global conference indicated that the best way to ensure data accuracy is via payroll and benefits. If inaccurate data affects an employee’s pay or benefits, it will be noted and corrected more quickly than anything else.

As an organization continues to evolve and expand internationally, its locations will vary in age, structure and resources. At each point in the organization’s life cycle, different HRIS solutions will be required making a truly global HRIS extremely complex and expensive. For example, Yahoo in Sunnyvale, California would use the HRIS differently for hiring as compared to Yahoo in Banglore, India. Sunnyvale would be looking for a handful of qualified candidates for a specific position, whereas Banglore would need assistance with simply staying on top of the numerous applications it receives every day. While it may be best to start off small, with implementing “vanilla” HR applications across the entire organization, it will take time to create and implement a global system that can benefit the entire organization.

It can be extremely difficult to quantify the benefits of a national HRIS let alone a global HRIS. As a result, senior management and organizational leaders may need to be persuaded (without metrics) to accept the strategic necessity of HR technology. As HR moves from being transactional to strategic, HRIS must move with it, further increasing the difficulty in quantifying the system. Managers and leaders who cannot see the value in HRIS are likely to not support it - resulting in global HRIS failure.
Local Customization vs. Global Standardization

Unique to global HR Information Systems is the balance between global, standardized HR processes and the need for local customization. Although 80% of HR processes are the same around the world (Insight Consulting Partners, 2004) the 20% can paralyze the global HRIS and the organization. Multinational organizations usually possess a corporate culture that fits various contexts and leads to different management styles (Hofstede, 1991 & 2001). However, global organizations often make the mistake of becoming too corporate-centric believing it knows best. In order to find the right mix of corporate and local culture when implementing a global HRIS, the organization must identify best HR practices and standardize those processes – some of which may be local. And while the local culture may not match the corporate culture, it should be complimentary.

It may be difficult for an organization to accept that one size of the global HRIS does not fit all. “Any company that mandates corporate standards in spite of local practices is doomed to fail” (Spoor in Greengard, 1995). Additionally, there is a risk for rebellion in pushing a standardized global system. “If you tell someone in another country how to do something, the tendency is for them to try and prove you wrong.” (Stright in Greengard, 1995). PwC was able to get over these hurdles when it mandated that all of its sizeable operations were required to implement a common HRIS. However, the specific decisions about how the global system should be used were able to be made locally.

Corning was able to complete global integration of PeopleSoft in all of its operating locations by the end of 2005. The system was not only integrated in 11 countries in an incredible 11 months, but also had the support and acceptance of local and regional employees. The company spent $500,000 on training and communication alone for the integration, which included the use of regional “Super Stewards”. These design and training counterparts were imperative to providing information throughout the process on what was or wasn’t working. They were made to feel comfortable enough to voice their concerns to headquarters and they spoke up when they were not “on board”. Understanding the needs of the local and regional employees was a “respectful dance” (Blake, 2006) but it made all the difference with getting local employees on board. The “Super Stewards” were asked what language they wanted to be trained in – English or local. Surprisingly, they asked to be trained in English. In turn, the “Super Stewards” trained local employees in the local language. Costs saving were realized as training materials were only printed in English. Corning and the “Super Stewards” felt that when employees had questions about using the system, they were more likely to ask the “Super Steward” than refer to the training materials. By the end of 2005, through the successful implementation of the global HRIS, the “One Company” corporate value was truly fostered.

Yahoo attributes much of its recent success in building a global talent acquisition system while managing to balance the global vs. local tug-of-war to extensive local employee involvement (Cushman & Orler, 2006). From the early planning stages, local input was sought and incorporated into all decisions. Questionnaires were sent out to each gather current business process information as well as both “needed” and “desired” business requirement information. Prospective HRIS vendors were required to give their presentations in various global locations to local employees rather than at the U.S. Headquarters. Not only did this help determine which vendors were motivated to the global project, but it also helped to establish trust and buy-in among local employees.

Protection of Employee Data in a Global HR Information System

As HR Information Systems become more sophisticated, the amount and detail of employee data increases. And while all organizations need to be concerned with HRIS security issues, global organizations need to be especially diligent.
In some of the areas in which it operates, the organization may face specific laws restricting the way it stores, handles and transfers employee data. Most notable of these laws is the EU Directive 95/46/EC – on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data. In terms of a global HRIS and the EU Directive, the organization must ensure that the employee data is limited to specific purposes, retained only as long as necessary, accurate and up-to-date, protected by adequate security measures and does not cross borders (Gosselin, 2006). Additionally, the employee must be notified of and have access to the data.

In terms of the employee data crossing borders, it may only be transferred to “third countries” (those outside the EU) if that country provides an adequate level of protection for the data. Options for guaranteeing data protection include, (but are not limited to) drafting individual contracts between the European business unit(s) and the U.S. Headquarters, certifying to the Safe Harbor Arrangement and ensuring the organization is providing “adequate” privacy protection as defined by the Directive and establishing binding corporate rules (BCR) or internal codes of conduct.

BCRs are a comprehensive way of meeting privacy requirements globally (Harris, 2006) and have many advantages 1) They provide a legal basis to transfer EU data from any EU member state to any part of the global organization 2) BCRs can yield a single global standard for storing, handling and transferring employee data to provide equal privacy protection for all employees, it can also address specific in-country compliance needs 3) BCRs eliminate unnecessary legal/regulatory overhead of other options 4) And they are flexible and can be adapted additionally allowing for the creation of user-friendly guidance for employees and agents. However, the main disadvantage is that there is an excessive amount of time required for approvals of BCRs – especially by each EU member state.

Employee data security is best handled at the local level (Greengard, 1995) and should involve as much employee involvement as possible. Global organizations must ensure that employees are provided with a self-service tool in their local language that allows them to see and update their personal information that is stored both domestically and internationally. As well, employees should not only know what personal information the organization has, but understand what it is being used for. Any agreements between the employee and the organization in terms of allowing a transfer of the employee’s data should be in writing and stored appropriately.

The Future of Global HR Information Systems

It is time to say “goodbye” to the golden age of transactional HRIS and software – payroll and benefits (Sommer, 2006) and “hello” to the new age of strategic HRIS and software – performance management, succession planning, competency based compensation and workforce analytics (Greengard, 2005). As HR aims to transform to a more efficient and strategic function, it must learn how to leverage technology and use it as a competitive advantage. If strategy is the real driver behind technology, HR Managers actively pursuing a global strategy will be able to guide the organization, the system and the vendors to create new solutions. And HR Executives who are accountable for the success of the global businesses must support the global HRIS effort. With all of these efforts, HR may finally be able to transform.
Works Cited


Annotated Bibliography


Abstract: A brief, yet important statement of how Colgate-Palmolive took its global succession-planning system and turned it into an expatriate knowledge database.


Abstract: In 2002, Corning HR made the decision to deploy its HRMS globally for all locations and employees. Initially, the project was time consuming, difficult and costly. Through a process excellence project, Corning HR developed a methodology and plan to complete 11 country integrations in 1 year. In 2005, with the help of external consultants, Corning HR completed the integration initiative and created a global information infrastructure.


Abstract: This report combines findings from literature reviews, initial qualitative interviews and an illustrative case study from the ongoing CIPD research project on technology and HR. The institute’s key findings support the thought that HR technology strategies must be flexible and that creating consistent global HR processes may reduce costs, increase efficiency and encourage global innovations and ideas. The report also raises key issues and emerging questions that the HR profession should address.


Abstract: A second report from CIPD provides data on how technology is changing people management and development practices. The key findings are summarized in three broad categories: i) the implementation and use of HRIS – the majority of organizations have a HRIS but it is not integrated with other IT systems ii) HR’s use of information technology for internal communication – intranets and self-serve systems, and iii) technology in the wider workplace – software is used less for operational functions and technological introductions in the company are most often made without considering its affects on HR. The report concludes with reflections on the issues and challenges that lie ahead.


Abstract: The process used to quickly select and deploy a global recruiting technology platform, the organization implementation strategy and lessons learned.


Abstract: The critical role that the privacy, integrity and protection of employee data play in organizations was the focus of several sessions at the International Association for Human Resource Information Management.

**Abstract:** Preparation for data privacy compliance as part of a global HRIS implementation involves planning, communicating, establishing agreements and understanding local country work council requirements.


**Abstract:** This article uses the experiences of several multinational organizations to illustrate how employee data can be successfully managed on a global basis. The author explores various factors that impact HR technology decisions including; culture, legislation, resources and strategy. The author concludes that effective global HRMS systems improve HR processes and HR's role as strategic partner.


**Abstract:** The author outlines how companies are seeking systems and services to streamline HR processes including: the basics of human resources administration, managing competencies, dealing with performance and learning. An examination of enterprise software vendors concludes that this group must provide more robust functionality as current and desired HR applications are slowly becoming more sophisticated to support HR’s increasingly strategic role. However, the author points out that a major challenge to “putting it all together” is connecting all of the systems and applications. An organization that is able to do will have an enormous competitive advantage.


**Abstract:** The two data privacy developments over the past year with the greatest impact on global systems have been data breach notification laws in the U.S. and Binding Corporate Rules (BCRs) in Europe.

Insight Consulting Partners. (2004). *Going Global With Your HRIS.*

http://www.insightcp.com/res_17.htm

**Abstract:** This consulting research article provides information and a quick list on why an organization should consider globalizing its HRIS, as well the benefits and issues of a global HRIS. For the benefits, the article quickly touches upon the various aspects of HR (recruitment, compensation, succession planning). And for the issues, the article focuses on technological obstacles.


**Abstract:** This article examines IBM’s business plan after the organization sold its personal-computer unit to Lenovo. In particular relevance to global HR information systems, IBM’s global talent database “Professional Marketplace” is briefly described.


**Abstract:** This report is based on the results of a survey distributed to large global organizations in the summer of 2003, and examines the impact of HR technology initiatives on corporate business strategies. In relation to technology concerns, the study explores strategic planning, the effectiveness of new procedures, rates of utilization and performance metrics.

**Abstract:** This report considers the HR technology plans and strategies of a number of major organizations in North American and Europe. Two major findings are put forward and examined in detail i) HR technology strategies require a degree of built-in flexibility which may reduce both the cost and time of strategy implementation and ii) creating consistent global HR processes may reduce costs, increase efficiency and encourage far-flung operations to share ideas and innovations. However, the author is quick to point out that organizations have difficulty in reaching a global consensus on what HR processes should be implemented, and when, and then ensuring that all adhere to the plan. The report suggests that communication is necessary in order to overcome this and other obstacles.


**Abstract:** This article examines how wireless devices, outsourcing and industry consolidation will change the landscape of HR technology. Employees will have greater access to HR information systems with the increase in wireless capabilities and devices. This raises the question of data security and the increased potential of a security breach. Organizations will continue to look to outsource transactional HR processes. And there will be further industry consolidation with software providers. The author “comfortably” predicts the specific direction of HR software and industry consolidation. Overall, the suggestion is that HR will become more involved with strategic acquisitions, the deployment and use of technology to minimize costs and finally enhance its overall strategic value to the business.


**Abstract:** Adequate HR systems automate many tasks. Great HR systems fundamentally change the way work is done and the value delivered. As ERP software is being re-platformed and re-architected the changes will have a material impact on what HR professionals do. The most advantageous changes underfoot may have more to do with the content than the transaction processing of newer solutions.


**Abstract:** Nearly 80% of companies globally have completed, or are in the process of, HR transformation. These companies are being driven by the need to align the HR function more closely with business objectives and by the desire to offer more strategic support to the organization. But many HR departments have yet to deliver improvements from the transformation process, and there remains a significant gap between what is expected of HR leaders and what they deliver. An 18-month study by Mercer involving 1,100 organizations worldwide revealed a remarkable consistency in the key drivers to HR transformation across the globe. The main driver was the need to align HR delivery with the organization’s business strategy. Second was the desire to transform both the perception and reality of HR as a high-cost, low-value function to a low-cost, high-value business partner. Through the transformation process, HR begins to move away from administration and towards a more value-added strategic role. The objective is to align the function with the organization’s goals, making it a strategic contributor that’s responsive to today’s dynamic business climate.
GLOBAL INNOVATION AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING IN HR

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As human resource management evolves into an ever-increasing means of competitive advantage for multinational corporations (MNC’s) greater importance is being placed on a corporation’s ability to manage and share human resource innovations. This paper discusses the concept of knowledge management (KM) as it pertains to a firm’s ability to share innovative HR practices from one HR function to another across both local and international boundaries. I will give background information on KM and its’ relationship to organizational learning from a corporate perspective and then narrow my focus to the relationship of intellectual, social, organizational, and human capital to creating HR innovation and sharing HR knowledge. Next, I will share how regional differences can impact sharing HR knowledge, and then I will highlight two case examples of MNC’s sharing HR knowledge across boundaries.

As more MNC’s use KM and knowledge sharing practices to help their global workforce obtain competitive advantages and higher total profits, they are turning to their human resource department for support (Wright & Holwerda, CAHRS). Effective knowledge sharing and HR initiatives share a common denominator, communication (Hackett, 2000). But, HR divisions need to be careful that, as they help their corporation with KM and knowledge sharing initiatives they do not neglect their own “learning capabilities” within HR. Learning capability in the HR context is defined as, “an HR unit’s ability to generate new ideas for HR practices, disseminate practices in an effective and efficient manner, and implement practices within their existing operations.” These capabilities are broken down further into three sub-categories; creation capability, transfer capability, and implementation capability. Interestingly, of the three sub-categories HR units scored highest in their transfer capabilities. This may be due to the fact that communication is rooted in most every aspect of HR, thus creating a common vision that sharing practices is vital to HR success (Wright & Holwerda, CAHRS). For the purposes of this paper, I will spend some time discussing creation capability but focus primarily on the transfer capability of HR units.

Knowledge Management & Organizational Learning

To understand how corporations are using knowledge management (KM) and organizational learning (OL) to support HR innovation it is important to have a base comprehension of these concepts and how they are linked.

In a study done by Brian Hackett (2000) titled, “Beyond Knowledge Management: New Ways to Work and Learn,” knowledge management is defined as,” An integrated, systematic approach to identifying, managing, and sharing all of an enterprise’s information assets, including databases, documents, policies, and procedures, as well as previously unarticulated expertise and experience held by individual workers.” In essence, it is gathering all the information and resources of a corporation and making them available to the individual employee. In turn, the employee uses these resources to create new innovative processes and thus, gives back to the firm.

Organizational learning (OL) is defined as, “A process that enables an organization to adapt to change and move forward by acquiring new knowledge, skills, or behaviors, and thereby transform itself.” Examples of successful OL are seen in continuous learning, knowledge sharing, cultural support of learning, as well as critical thinking and risk taking with new ideas (Hackett, 2000).

Traditionally the challenge of linking KM with OL, as described by Janet McAllister, former Vice President, Global Learning, IBM, has been that, “focus on KM comes from strategy and marketing executives and the focus on learning comes from corporate training and HR staffs (Hackett, 2000).” At the strategic level, these groups have very different functions within an organization, thus, making it very
difficult for them to communicate with one another. That said, the drivers of KM and OL within organizations have begun to recognize commonalities through tools and practices that create a concept of “shared learning” or knowledge sharing that views KM and OL as two sides of the same coin (ibid). Major studies analyzing different KM and OL initiatives have highlighted knowledge-sharing cultures as a primary necessity for success. Through initiatives rooted in knowledge sharing, organizations have been able to achieve significant financial gains (ibid).

**Intellectual, Social, Organizational & Human Capital**

For successful innovation and knowledge sharing to occur corporations need to pay attention to the relationship of their intellectual, social, organizational, and human capital. Intellectual capital refers to the ability of individuals as well as the unit as a whole, to create innovative processes and procedures. Social capital, such as communication channels and social networks, help the intellectual capital disseminate the new information. Organizational capital, such as HR information systems, gives corporations the ability to capture new information required for proper implementation. Finally, human capital, which can be broken down further into local and international human capital, is vital in that, if you do not have people with the correct knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform in new and ever changing environments, the whole relationship collapses (Wright & Holwerda, CAHRS).

Management of the relationship of all these forms of capital is both complex and dynamic. Systems, local and abroad, that incorporate human capital are particularly difficult to manage because of the unique nature of individuals; no one person is the same.

**Creating HR Innovation**

In trying to better understand different conditions that impact the creation of HR innovation within HR units around the globe Shad Morris and Scott Snell (CAHRS), performed research to determine whether different forms of capital were able to provide, “sustainable competitive advantages through specific knowledge flows.” More specifically, a component of the study looked for relationships between human capital and HR units’ practice creation capability or innovation creation. What Morris and Snell (CAHRS) found was that local and international HR human capital is positively associated with innovation. In addition, the research determined that there was a negative association between network focus and innovation creation.

Possible explanations for the positive association with local capital gravitate towards the accepted wisdom that local capital has an intimate knowledge of the host country politics, legal systems, cultural norms, unique client and supplier needs, as well as the general competitive environment (Morris & Snell, CAHRS). While international capital’s knowledge surrounding specific communities is not as intimate as their local counterparts, notions surrounding their positive association with innovation highlight a confidence they possess around custom frameworks they have developed through personal experiences on how to search for and meet the needs of different local communities. Human capital with extensive international experience has also been found to base more decisions off local considerations versus corporate pressures, thus further supporting innovation (ibid). Finally, hypotheses concerning the negative association between network focus and innovation creation share similar characteristics to that of groupthink. The thought being that as HR divisions continually refer back to the same network without exploring other avenues they trap themselves in a cycle of making decisions based on a relatively limited amount of information and opinions (ibid).

In stepping back, one interesting piece of information concerning HR innovations’ relation to learning capabilities in HR units is that creation capability was found, overall, to be the least developed of the three learning capabilities. So, it seems that as HR units are increasingly involved in supporting
innovation creation within other divisions of their corporations they may be less comfortable generating new practices within their own units (Wright & Holwerda, CAHRS).

Sharing HR Knowledge

In much of the research I have found related to HR innovation, some mention of transfer capability or knowledge sharing is highlighted as being paramount to the success of both local and global HR innovation. Morris and Snell (CAHRS) focused a component of their research specifically on the relationship between an HR units transfer capability, or knowledge sharing, and their human, social, and organizational capital. Overall, Morris and Snell (CAHRS) found a strong relationship between knowledge sharing and shared vision, a moderate relationship between knowledge sharing and information systems, and a negative relationship between knowledge sharing and international human capital.

The strong relationship with shared vision may be supported by the concept that when people share a common bond or purpose they are more likely to share information or more specifically different HR practices. The insignificant relationship between sharing and information system may be due to the fact that information systems are simply a technological tool. If, for instance, a corporation is lacking a shared vision or the system does not support existing social structures there may be no incentive to use the information system. The negative relationship between sharing and international human capital may be a product of overconfidence on the part of the international capital that can lead to a feeling of “having everything they need.” This negative relationship also creates a unique challenge because there is a positive relationship between international capital and innovation creation. Therefore, companies will have to place close attention to their international human capital and make sure there is an appropriate balance to accommodate both innovation creation and knowledge sharing (Morris & Snell, CAHRS).

It is important to note that social capital’s relationship with HR knowledge sharing within MNC’s is essential because it focuses on HR’s ability to tap into and disseminate new ideas. “Without aspects of social capital for linking knowledge, pockets of intelligence may remain isolated and ultimately swept from the organizational system (Snell, Youndt, & Wright, 1996).”

Regional Differences

Individuals and groups find support through a myriad of complex HR systems. This fact is highlighted by the differences found in HR processes across cultural boundaries. Research published in the International Journal of Human Resource Management, by Markus Pudelko (2005) looks at knowledge sharing across American, Japanese, and German fortune 500 companies. Pudelko’s (2005) research found that HRM managers expect to see a convergence of HRM models that would be a hybrid of what models used currently in these three countries. To determine whether it was worth learning HRM practices from other countries, members of each country were asked if they had seen any trends within their companies, in the last twenty years, which migrated towards one country model over another.

Quantitative analysis determined that the largest amount of interest was oriented around attributes associated with the American HRM model (by a significant margin), followed by interest in Japan’s model, and interest in the German’s model coming in at a distant third. Questions related to future trends in interest uncovered a sharp decline in future interest in the Japanese model by German and American HR experts and an increase in interest in the German model from Japanese HR experts. These trends indicate an overall dissatisfaction and disinterest in the Japanese model (Pudelko, 2005).

Qualitative data helped determine specific interests in attributes of HRM across the country models. Japanese companies indicated an interest in American employee assessment and promotion criteria, in
both past and future trends. Broken down further, interest was oriented primarily around ‘performance orientation,’ followed by ‘result and objective orientation.’ This again illustrates a potential dissatisfaction in Japanese companies concerning their own HRM model. German HR experts chose U.S ‘strategies’ as their primary interest followed by ‘employee incentives (ibid).’

In contrast, American firms showed very little interest in the Japanese model other than information on the past concerning Japanese ‘processes.’ German interest in the Japanese model was considerably higher and also focused primarily on the past with Japanese ‘processes,’ then ‘superior-subordinate relationships,’ followed by ‘employee incentives (ibid).’

Pudelko (2005) found very little interest in the adoption of German HRM attributes by U.S. or Japanese HR experts and as a result, abstained from charting the results. This lack of interest highlights the low degree to which the German model is considered a role model for other countries. Further probing for reasons as to why the German model is not considered to be a role model uncovered an answer not related to the perceived worth of the model, but rather, a lack of knowledge concerning the German model. Basically, U.S. and Japanese HR experts know very little about the German model, and thus, discount it (ibid).

Wright and Holwerda (CAHRS) also uncovered regional trends associated with knowledge management and “learning capabilities”, specifically “transfer capabilities (see exhibits 1-1).” They found that Africa, Central and Eastern Europe, and the Middle East exhibited comparatively high levels of transfer capability compared to other regions in their study. Thoughts discern this trend may be due to the fact that these sub-regions tend to be less developed than other sub-regions and this may lower their confidence in their abilities to create and implement, thus, producing a higher reliance on HR support (Wright & Holwerda, CAHRS).

Is it worth learning processes of HRM models from other countries? Research from Pudelko’s (2005) study indicates that it is better to look at other HRM models as sources of ‘inspiration’ that can be customized to considerations that are unique to the different countries versus a direct adoption of a particular process.

**Case Examples**

While I have been able to locate two case examples on knowledge sharing of HR innovations it is important to note that there are very few examples available highlighting this relationship. That said, additional research is available on KM and knowledge sharing in a more general context, as it relates to firms. I have attached exhibits 1-2, 1-3, and 1-4 for points of reference as you read through these two examples (Hackett, 2000). Exhibit 1-2 is a list of concepts and phrases, compiled from interviews, related to shifting towards a knowledge-sharing organization. Exhibit 1-3 lists common knowledge sharing tactics and tools. Finally, Exhibit 1-4 is a summary of lessons learned from Weyerhauser implementing KM initiatives into their organization. You will find that some issues highlighted in these exhibits hold similarities to the case examples below.

**IBM Example** (CAHRS: Case Study)

In recent years, IBM has had robust discussions around how to make their HR managers to be more consultative—more strategic. To develop successful global HR practices they focused on two areas: One, thought leadership from countries, regions, and divisions, and two, buy-in. IBM’s approach to knowledge sharing within their HR divisions has a strong emphasis on providing local branches with extensive autonomy. Bob Calamai stated, “we are trying to be less paternalistic, and want people and managers to own more of their stuff…to do this we had to make sure that our line managers know that this is their
company and you make the decisions.” A byproduct of being locally focused has been increased knowledge sharing of HR practices across regional boundaries. One local HR manager attributes strong connections and knowledge sharing with her HR community to, “principles of being company and customer oriented no matter what central rules might be broken.”

IBM corporate supplies support for their local HR units through various means. One form of support comes from creating programs that can be adapted locally to shifts in the environment. This enables HR subunits ability to develop custom systems and practices with an ever-watchful eye on the constant changing needs of IBM clients. Another example is corporate allowing the definition of employee performance to be relative. This allowed regional leaders to base performance ratings for their employees off peers within the region rather than corporate-wide. A final illustration of increased autonomy is IBM corporate turning the distribution of compensation over to regional managers. Corporate understands that empowering local autonomy can be very complex and requires extensive creativity and innovation.

IBM places a strong emphasis on training as a strong driver of knowledge sharing. Currently IBM budgets $700 million annually towards formal classroom training and online learning. They have created an On Demand learning strategy that, according to Nancy Lewis, Vice President, IBM On Demand Learning, allows IBM to bring, “the learning to work,” an exciting new era of learning that promises to leverage the collective expertise of employees, teams, and organizations throughout its enterprise.”

Internationally, IBM has faced unique challenges. For instance, in Europe the branches are highly integrated in knowledge sharing within their region but run into difficulty extracting relevant knowledge from the U.S. or other outside regions. They also recognize that different geographies and even different business units may require varied levels of HR expertise. To combat these challenges IBM focuses on three things: One, eighteen to twenty-four month job rotations, two, numerous training opportunities, and three, the “Five-minute Drill.” Training focuses on doing HR in countries outside of their own and can be in the form of formal training, paid school, workshops, as well as other options. The “Five-minute Drill” refers to checking in periodically on key employees and is used exclusively in Europe.

IBM’s Asia-Pacific divisions incorporate a tremendous amount of new practice development and knowledge sharing among their HR groups. For instance, the VP of HR for Asia-Pacific has a monthly knowledge sharing meeting with a leadership team consisting of members from all reporting countries. Typically there is always some form of customization that occurs due to language. For example, even if English is used there needs to be some form of translation.

It is typically thought that almost all HR innovation has its’ roots in IBM’s corporate U.S. office but it is important to note that this is not the case. There are times when practices formed in the U.S. are simply deemed unacceptable in other countries. One example sighted refers to corporate policies on diversity, gay and lesbian issues. These policies clash with Asian culture, thus, IBM forgoes gay and lesbian policies in Asia. Latin American divisions have also been found to supply innovative HR practices and they use a large amount of knowledge sharing.

Shell Example (CAHRS: Case Study)

Shell has taken a decidedly different approach to the formulation of their global HR practices. While a primary driver for their success comes from their strength in locally managing diverse people in diverse settings they are finding this local connectedness to be insufficient in the face of increasing market integration. One HR manager voiced a commonly held belief at Shell that, “there was too much local reinvention going on.” This belief was elaborated by another who stated, “We haven’t figured out how to get rid of redundancy. We are locked with a legacy of a lot of redundancy. For example, we still have 20 different payroll systems in Europe.”
Shell felt the response to increasing market integration should be through simplifying and integrating systems that offered standardized practices and processes in this globalized market. The challenge then became convincing HR managers that they should put equal or greater emphasis on locating and using HR practices from within Shell rather than strategic development of locally focused HR practices. The previous HR entrepreneurial culture had diverted attention away from implementation and integration and created a strong localized mentality that felt, “what works in one country or region won’t work in another.” Historically knowledge sharing was not strong at Shell. One HR manager clarified by stating, “Communication is minimal among the businesses. Upstream people do not talk to downstream people.” Shell also struggled with older locations that held deeply engrained models because they made employees more resistant to change compared to their younger counterparts.

Initially, Shell heavily invested time and money in creating a logical explanation as to why they should have a stronger more integrated HR system. They produced a good argument but still found resistance around change. Simon Fitzpatrick, Deputy Leader of HR Futures, The Hague, said it best by stating, “I think we have won the intellectual battle of the wisdom of simplifying and standardizing HR globally. But now we need to get the hearts in the local managers persuaded to yield to one global standard.” Shell was moving towards a model where practices developed at the corporate level should always be executed and practices acquired from other local levels are optional.

Shell’s first step in tackling this challenge was through slowly obtaining buy-in from HR managers. Top executives brought together key HR players by forming HR networks that met on a regular basis. Next, Shell encouraged the creation of other social networks and instituted uniform information systems for all business divisions. These helped improve knowledge sharing across business division and company boundaries while simultaneously increasing standardization. Social ties also helped HR players solve indifferences particularly in Shell’s Asia-Pacific divisions because, unlike, the U.S. and Europe that are deemed low-touch environments, Asia is high touch. As a result, the Asia-Pacific division established regional HR manager meetings that meet three times a year to improve relationships. The U.S. also established networks that meet three times a year but they seem to make more use of emailing lists and teleconferencing versus face-to-face meetings.

Other forms of knowledge sharing come in the form of network councils that include an “HR best practice network.” These networks are connected to a larger intranet information system where information can be stored and retrieved for use and implementation. Another type of information system that Shell has incorporated into their arsenal is called “Livelink.” Livelink creates the ability for team members, regional and global alike; to work together on a project using one share drive. Shell also encourages HR managers to join external councils because many HR practices are not industry specific so it is entirely plausible to learn an HR best practice from a firm in a completely unrelated industry.

**Conclusion**

There is extensive complexity in relation to knowledge sharing of HR innovation across MNC’s. In order to gain an appreciation for what is required to share HR knowledge across local and international boundaries corporations must build a base understanding of; corporate level KM and OL; the impact of intellectual, social, organizational, and human capital on innovation creation and knowledge sharing among HR units; regional distinctions; as well as sharing HR knowledge within different business strategies. It is important to note that after performing extensive research on sharing HR knowledge and innovation across MNC’s, my primary source of information became working papers supplied by CAHRS. I am stating this to highlight the fact that current research on this topic is very rare. Therefore, in order to gain a more thorough understanding of these relationships more case studies should be performed on different industries as well as different business models.
HR Unit Learning Capabilities

Exhibit 1-1 (Wright & Holwerda, CAHRS)
### Shifting Toward a Knowledge-Sharing Organization

What shift in cultural norms and artifacts are some organizations trying to make to support a knowledge-sharing organization? The following list of concepts and phrases was compiled from interviews with senior line and staff executives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From</th>
<th>To</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge hoarding is power</td>
<td>Knowledge sharing is valued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many management levels</td>
<td>Few management levels</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sporadic training</td>
<td>Continuous learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Position power</td>
<td>Network power</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inflated titles</td>
<td>Few or no titles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uneven responsibility</td>
<td>Shared responsibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>Culture of blame</td>
<td>Culture of accountability</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rules-based</td>
<td>Values-based</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional silos</td>
<td>Cross-functional teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk adverse</td>
<td>Entrepreneurial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inward–top management focus</td>
<td>Outward–customer focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only managers know financials</td>
<td>Open book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information on need-to-know basis</td>
<td>Open door</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on talent, experts, and key employees</td>
<td>Focus on entire workforce–learn from each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;What's in it for me?&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;What's in it for our customer?&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;It's not my job.&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;How can we help?&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Not invented here&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;Steal ideas shamelessly&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate of cynicism</td>
<td>Community of celebration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task forces selected by management</td>
<td>Communities of practice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exhibit 1-2 (Hackett, 2000)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Common Knowledge-Sharing Tactics</strong></th>
<th><strong>Common Knowledge-Sharing Tools</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communities of Practice</strong></td>
<td><strong>Electronic Meeting Systems</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As people find a reason to work together, they share stories and lessons learned. In short, they teach each other the practice.</td>
<td>These products support small groups of people usually working in the same room at the same time (although distributed and any-time access are also supported), each with a PC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learning Histories</strong></td>
<td><strong>Virtual Communities</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A learning history is a retrospective history of significant events in a company’s recent past, described in the voices of people who took part in them.</td>
<td>Virtual communities are being supported with a package of capabilities including highly evolved bulletin boards, chat capabilities, and computer conferencing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>After Action Reviews</strong></td>
<td><strong>Workgroup Utilities &amp; Groupware Development Tools</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The U.S. Army defines After Action Reviews (AARs) as a professional discussion of an event, focused on performance standards, that enables participants to discover what happened, why it happened, and how to sustain strengths and improve on weaknesses. AARs</td>
<td>These development tools include utilities to support group working and remote access to someone else’s computer, and specific tools for workgroup applications development. These</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge Fairs</strong></td>
<td><strong>Information Distribution &amp; Push Products</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge fairs are forums where various company units congregate to demonstrate their knowledge-sharing efforts and learn from each other. This can be done face-to-face or online through knowledge Web pages.</td>
<td>These products search for and place up-to-date information on a Web browser according to pre-determined categories or categories determined with a growing knowledge of the user’s interest as determined by prior searches on the Internet or intranet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Talk Rooms &amp; Work Villages</strong></td>
<td><strong>Intelligent Search Engines &amp; Taxonomies</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many firms are using physical workspaces specifically designed to foster reflection, interaction, and collaboration. They generally provide open space for people to run into each other.</td>
<td>These IT-based tools connect to concepts around word and phrase searches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action Learning</strong></td>
<td><strong>Data Visualization &amp; Knowledge Mapping</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The value of most action learning initiatives is the common language and common sense of purpose that results from such methods. Coaching and mentoring are key tools for facilitating action learning.</td>
<td>Data visualization is used to display a graphic view of concepts related to a user query. By delivering information graphically, the software allows users to view query results in context and find relevant data quickly and easily. When a collection of information changes, the software dynamically reflects the change in its concept map.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Futurizing</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Futurizing, or future search conferences, is an approach to large-scale involvement that starts with a focus on the past and ends with a consensus list of elements they think ought to be in the future vision.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Common Knowledge-Sharing Tactics</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Suggestion Programs</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Suggestion programs have always been at the essence of knowledge sharing. Much can be learned by looking at Toyota, Dana, and other firms that make suggestion programs work.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Research Outposts</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>A research outpost is the establishment of an R&amp;D facility in a hotbed of innovation such as Silicon Valley, Silicon Alley, or in a key market.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Collaborative Conversations</strong></td>
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<td>These facilitated conversations revolve around questions that matter to the organization. This involves making conversations a core business process.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Workplace digital storytelling</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The use of video, digital recording, and other technologies includes methods of telling and transferring stories that, in turn, transfer lessons learned and offer key insights and cultural understanding.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational Ethnography &amp; Archaeology</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Included in this approach are tools and techniques for gathering knowledge about an organization by observing its knowledge behaviors and by studying the knowledge artifacts utilized and produced.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Exhibit 1-3 (Hackett, 2000)
### General Findings
1. Tightly link KM to a priority business objective.
2. KM entails an integrated approach to people, processes, and technology; it is not a project.
3. KM should not be a separate staff function.

### People and Culture
1. Senior management needs to set the tone and show support. Day-to-day reinforcement and coaching must come from mid-level.
2. Learning and sharing are equally important.
3. Trust is essential: it must be built to overcome the effects of "not invented here" and "knowledge is power." You must trust your employees. Employees must trust that sharing enhances employment status and does not undermine the business's need for them.
4. Human interaction cannot be replaced. It is especially needed to transfer tacit knowledge.
5. Rewards/recognition linked directly to KM must be carefully evaluated. They can have unexpected and unintended consequences.

### Processes
1. Key KM processes must be defined. These include:
   - capturing, sharing, and applying knowledge;
   - developing new knowledge; and protecting knowledge assets.
2. There is no one best process for KM. Process design must include:
   - content, scope and speed; intended use; and expected outcomes.
3. Connectivity is more effective than capture:
   - Facilitating the connections between people is more successful than trying to capture and sort knowledge for all potential accesses.
   - Enabling/expecting people to learn, share, refine, and apply knowledge is the key. Multiple channels of knowledge transfer must be supported.

### Technology
1. Technology is an enabler: it is not KM.
2. Make the technology fit the work, not vice versa.
3. Technology does not eliminate the need for people to meet. It may increase the need for contact to build trust, and freely interact in problem solving.
4. New techniques are not needed. Old methods can be just as effective, such as teamwork, process management, benchmarking, continuous improvement.

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Exhibit 1-4 (Hackett, 2000)
Works Cited


Annotated Bibliography


Abstract: Companies around the world have begun to make real business contributions through practices associated with knowledge management (KM) and organizational learning (OL). Knowledge management and organizational learning have different distinctions and approaches at the strategic level, but they are increasingly similar in terms of the tactics and tools they employ. Implementing KM or OL on an enterprise-wide basis can be expensive and politically sensitive. It should also be viewed as a long-term investment that involves all segments of the business. Leading KM and OL practitioners and observers believe that the current efforts are only a prelude to a bigger payoff—building deeper customer relationships with a fully engaged workforce.


Abstract: This paper addresses how the use of differentiated knowledge stocks (human, social, and organizational capital) provides sustainable competitive advantages through specific knowledge flows. The authors conduct research using a sample of 187 HR subunits from 20 different MNCs. The overall implications of the findings from this study are that learning capabilities require a differentiated approach in terms of knowledge stock investment and development.


Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to develop suggestions as to how to learn from best practices in HRM across national borders. The suggestions are based on survey data gathered from 232 HRM managers from American, Japanese and German top 500 companies. The empirical data suggest that HR managers from all three countries expect a partial convergence towards a hybrid model.


Abstract: This paper draws upon resource-based theory of sustained competitive advantage, organizational learning, and organizational configurations to develop a framework for thinking about contemporary research issues in strategic human resource management. Several areas are highlighted in which SHRM can play a role in building and renewing a firm’s competitive advantage and in which configurational research can help expand prior notions of internal and external fit in SHRM.

Abstract: This case delivers a past present comparison of IBM’s coordination and flexibility in order to provide insight on how IBM has been able to achieve success in producing consistent, high-quality products and services throughout the world with a localized touch. Detailed background information is provided on IBM’s corporate structure as well as short and long-term business strategies. IBM’s HR functions are broken down into all its’ sub-units in order to highlight how they are transformed to contribute to IBM’s success. To develop successful global HR practices IBM focused on two areas: One, thought leadership from countries, regions, and divisions, and two, buy-in. IBM’s overarching goal revolves around increasing the autonomy of regional groups so they are more able to provide customized service to their clients.


Abstract: This case discusses how Shell’s past HR success has come from their ability to locally manage diverse people in diverse settings but market integration is challenging this approach and forcing Shell to rethink their strategy. Shell is now focusing on a more simplified and integrated HR system that is able to offer standardized practices and processes in a globalized market. The case discusses detailed steps Shell is taking to achieve increased standardization in HR as well as the barriers they have faced with during the process.


Abstract: With the rise in global competition and the increasing presence of multinational companies (MNC’s), numerous questions have been raised regarding differences in human resource (HR) practices across the globe. This study gathered data from 239 respondents across 36 countries from within 20 MNC’s to examine the similarities and differences across countries or sub-regions. General results indicated a trend towards convergence with regard to beliefs in the effectiveness of HR best practices, but divergence with regard to their actual implementation or usage.
ABOUT CAHRS

The Center for Advanced Human Resource Studies (CAHRS) is the world's leading partnership between industry and academia, devoted to global human resource management. CAHRS sponsors represent over 60 of the world's premier companies. The CAHRS partnership provides the connection between these leading companies, Cornell University, the ILR School, and leading faculty, students and intellectual leaders throughout the world. The CAHRS relationship offers the opportunity to work directly with key faculty and students, to participate in, influence, and be the first to learn about new research findings and applications. CAHRS provides sponsors with unique opportunities to participate in university classes and executive education, exploit the world-class resources of the Catherwood Library, and sustain their leading edge through unique interactions with the network of CAHRS sponsors. CAHRS sponsors are especially visible and influential with students and faculty at Cornell and the ILR School, which is consistently ranked as the top source of international human resource talent in the world.
ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Jake Holwerda, BS ILR 2006, MS 2008
Jake is a first year MS student in the School of Industrial and Labor Relations at Cornell University. He will graduate in May 2008 and will then continue his studies in pursuit of a PhD. He received a B.S. in Industrial and Labor Relations from Cornell University in May of 2006. While an undergraduate, Jake was a member of the men’s varsity heavyweight rowing team and served as vice president of a campus society. Jake has interned at Pfizer and has also had experience in manufacturing work settings. In the past he has studied and written about change management, organizational agility, and employee well being. In addition to having a white paper included in the fall sponsor meeting, Jake worked with CAHRS during the summer of 2006. He began his position as a graduate research assistant this fall.

Anne-Marie Kontakos, MBA/MILR 2007
Anne-Marie is in her third semester of the dual degree program with the Johnson Graduate School of Management and the School of Industrial and Labor Relations at Cornell University. She received a BASc in Gerontology from the University of Guelph and then survived the technology boom and bust while working at TD Waterhouse in Toronto, Canada. Anne-Marie spent the past summer at Dell Inc., in the company’s Global Site Development group. At Cornell, Anne-Marie tries to balance her free time between the halls of Sage and Ives. She began her position as a graduate research assistant this fall.

Colin Dicke, MILR 2007
Colin Dicke is in his third semester of the masters degree program with the School of Industrial and Labor Relations. He received a B.A. degree in International Relations and a B.A. degree in Sociology both from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in May of 1995. Currently as a graduate student Colin also serves as President of the MILR Graduate Student Association. As an undergraduate Colin was a member of Wisconsin’s heavyweight rowing team. Colin Dicke spent the past summer at General Mills where he performed research on change management and continuous improvement as well as retention issues for their Supply Chain division. Colin came to Cornell with seven years of HR related work experience.