



J. Mack Robinson College of Business
GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY



W. T. BEEBE

NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2007

Welcome to the W. T. Beebe Newsletter, written by the students of the W. T. Beebe Institute of Personnel and Employment Relations in the Department of Managerial Sciences at Georgia State University. Along with providing information on Beebe events, it provides interesting reading for HR professionals and students alike.

STUDY ABROAD: HR ISSUES IN EUROPE

BY: MARGARITA ALMEDA

The journey toward a unified Europe brought about the euro and the EU passport, but its effects are also seen in human capital issues that are important not just to the EU citizens but the various corporations and countries that play in the global business arena. In general, one casually refers to Europe as a whole but may mean France or Germany or Belgium. Because of history and geography, people combine all countries in Europe in one category. In recent years, however, one may actually speak of Europe as a single entity and not be that far from the truth. The various European Union (EU) institutions continue to evolve and to shape how the world views and negotiates with all 27 member countries.

Graduate students of Georgia State University were able to explore some of these issues in the three-week study abroad program in Toulouse, France in May 2007. The first half of the program was devoted to marketing, while the second half focused on management issues. Led by Professors Cordula Barzantny and Alain Klarsfeld of Ecole Supérieure de Commerce Toulouse, students learned about compensation and the social structure in most EU countries and EU directives in areas such as collective redundancies, health and safety and discrimination.

Discussions regarding compensation issues in EU countries touched on how much of total compensation is benefits and the real cost to the employers. The differences in compensation between the western countries and the eastern countries and the effect on how firms decide where to open an office also generated interesting discussions among the students. Most were able to relate to these differences because of the regional differences in pay here in the United States. Interestingly, the concept of regional differences in compensation is fairly new to the EU citizens who were not as mobile in prior decades as they are now, whereas workers in the United States have always had the option of working in states that are known to pay higher wages.

The EU institutions must always strive for balance in their directives as all the member countries are very protective of maintaining autonomy over their affairs. Directives from the EU are usually broad, in order to give latitude to member countries in their implementation. In effect, the EU directives establish the minimum requirements, and the countries are free to either comply with the minimum or build upon it. Since discussing the differences among all the EU member nations would take much longer than a week, the class focused on the primary models that represent the spectrum: the United Kingdom, France, and Germany. Discussions focused on directives regarding collective redundancies and discrimination and how the UK, France and Germany abide or surpass these directives. Furthermore, the class also learned about labor relations in the UK, France and Germany and the distinct characteristics of the labor unions in each of these countries.

The other half of the program focused on learning about marketing practices in France, the French consumer, merchandising and business-to-business issues. Also during this part, the group took a trip to the Airbus facilities and

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SPOTLIGHT: STUDENTS AND FACULTY



First and foremost, we are proud to mention that for the sixth consecutive year, *U.S. News Survey* includes the undergraduate program of the Robinson College of Business among the top 50 business school programs in the country! They also recognized the MBA program as one of the top ten part-time programs in the nation for the 12th straight year! For the 2008 survey, the college ranked eight in the nation. Furthermore, the *Financial Times* ranked Robinson's Executive MBA program as one of the top programs in the world for the fifth consecutive year! Our EMBA program places 57th in the world and in the top 25 in the United States. The recognition serves as a testament to the hardworking faculty and staff and the committed alumni and community leaders.



MaShelle Epps is a true blue Panther! She received her BA in Psychology, with magna cum laude honors, and her MBA with a concentration in HR from Georgia State University. Now, she is a part of the College of Arts and Sciences and is their newest Human Resources Officer. Welcome back, MaShelle!



Randy Patterson, a Beebe Institute alum, has accepted the promotion to Director of Learning for The Home Depot in Atlanta, GA. Randy most recently served in the role of Regional Human Resources Director based in Washington, DC. Randy earned his MBA in HR Management.



Ángela Vela, who is a current Beebe student and contributor to the newsletter, participated in the 17th Annual Southeast Human Resources Conference held in Atlanta in October 2007. She presented on the project she is working on with two other Beebe students, Catrina Pritchett and Keia Broden, on the HR implications of Sarbanes-Oxley.

Cindy Vitale, who is set to graduate in December, recently accepted a position with The HoneyBaked Ham Company as an HR Analyst. Congratulations, Cindy!



Dr. Kay Bunch recently published "Training Failure as a Consequence of Organizational Culture" in *Human Resource Development Review* Volume 6. Dr. Bunch was kind enough to summarize her work for this issue of the Beebe Newsletter!



Dr. Deborah Butler spoke with the *Atlanta Business Chronicle* about diversity, and along with Dr. Ben Tepper, she served on a panel for *Atlanta* magazine assisting them on a workplace study. Furthermore, *Money* magazine sought her advice for their September issue.

PRACTICING DECENCIES: ETHICS IN THE WORKPLACE

BY: ÁNGELA VELA



Ángela Vela
Beebe Student

Ever since Enron's fall, ethics in the workplace has become a hot issue in corporate America. Under the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002, public companies are even required to have a code of ethics to guide employees' behavior. The question now is: how can companies bring their code of ethics to life? How do you go from mandating compliance to really changing the culture?

This is just the issue that Steve Harrison tackled at an Executive Breakfast Forum I had the chance to attend on September 20th, sponsored by The Center for Ethics and Corporate Responsibility at the Robinson College of Business. His talk, "The New Leadership Imperative: From Compliance to Decency," advocated changing a company's culture through setting the right "tone at the top." According to Mr. Harrison, leaders simply cannot mandate ethical behavior; only through practicing their company's values can they create an ethical culture. In his own words, "the pot only fills from the bottom up."

To change the culture of a company, according to Mr. Harrison, leaders must practice "decencies" – simple, tangible but powerful actions that everyone can relate to, and which actually don't cost any money. Examples of such "decencies" include: having the code of conduct in a visible place in your office, conducting table talks about culture, taking the "open door" to the people, recognizing those behind the scenes, avoiding perks, being the first to arrive and the last to leave, praising in public and rebuking in private, sharing the credit, knowing that "tough" and "love" can go together, and writing thank you notes.

Lastly, according to Mr. Harrison, leaders must remember that "it's always show time" and everybody is watching: how you treat people every day will not only leave an everlasting impression on them but will ultimately affect your company's culture.

Mr. Harrison is Chairman of Lee Hecht Harrison, one of the world's largest career management services companies, with over 240 offices in 36 countries. Most recently, he served as the Worldwide Chief Compliance and Human Resources Officer of Adecco, the world's largest HR solutions company and Lee Hecht Harrison's parent. His new book, "The Manager's Book of Decencies," elaborates on how the practice of small decencies can help achieve cultural change in a corporate setting.

SPRING SEMESTER ELECTIVES

Some of the classes offered during the Spring 2008 semester:

HR Recruitment and Selection - a course for managers charged with finding and hiring the right people for the job and for anyone looking to make a career change or to move up in the organization; an in-depth study on ability tests, interviews, personality tests and other selection methods and how to use them effectively.

Legal and Ethical Environment of HRM - a course that provides a working knowledge of employment law and ethical decision making; presents a framework for analyzing issues related to the Civil Rights Act, the Equal Pay Act and other laws that affect HRM.

Strategic & International HR Management - a course that focuses on the role of human resources in providing a strategic competitive advantage for international organizations.

Questions regarding the HR courses for next semester may be directed to Lucy McClurg, Ph.D. at mgtlnm@langate.gsu.edu or (404) 413-7539.



TRAINING FAILURE AS A RESULT OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

BY: DR. KAY BUNCH

Organizations spend as much as \$200 billion annually on training and development, but much of this investment appears squandered on ill-conceived or poorly implemented programs. Clearly, training or human resource development does not take place in a vacuum. Even with perfect design and enthusiastic trainees, positive change or transfer requires organizational support. How often, for example, do practitioners conduct training to foster independent thinking only to send the trainee back to an autocratic manager? Culture has been described as “one of the most powerful and stable forces operating in organizations.” Yet, there has been scant scholarly attention on the influence of organization culture on training effectiveness. Organizational culture is multilayered. *Artifacts* and *patterns of behavior* are visible characteristics that reflect and perpetuate underlying *norms, values, and assumptions*.

At the surface, *artifacts* are the “physical manifestations and products of cultural activity.” They may convey organizational support for training through impressive training facilities and the hierarchical position of training leaders, but the real meaning of artifacts can be misconstrued. An organization may use its impressive training facilities or large budget to provide training of no value to the organization or the employee. *Patterns of behavior* are observable activities such as decision-making, communication, and new employee socialization that reflect underlying beliefs, values, and assumptions. Organizational leaders can trivialize training through symbolic behavior such as hiring unqualified practitioners, excluding training leaders from the strategic planning process, or reflexively firing trainers at the first sign of an economic slowdown. *Behavioral norms* are the beliefs of organizational members that guide actions and emerge from previous experience and cultural reinforcement. Beliefs about the potential benefits of training such as promotion or increases in pay better predict the likelihood for training success than the training budget. *Values* are the importance given certain aspects of the organization such as quality versus quantity and affect the preference for and effectiveness of interventions. For example, well-designed customer service training will have little impact if supervisors emphasize the number of transactions processed per hour rather than customer satisfaction. The most elusive yet powerful layer of culture is subconscious *assumptions*, the source for all other facets of culture. It is difficult to identify assumptions because even individuals holding them are not mindful of their existence. This explains why managers may espouse great support for training but cut the training budget.

Training failure can be a manifestation of the values, beliefs, and assumptions shared by members of the organizational subcultures that emerge from membership in various groupings such as *function, hierarchical level, line or staff, and profession*. Considering differences in various areas including technology, structure, and external influences, it is logical to assume that *functional* departments have their own culture that varies in degree of consistency with the dominant organizational culture. Perceived goal congruence between the function and the organization enhances the power and status of the department, which in turn influences perceived performance and value to the organization. Relative to other functions, training has little power and prestige with many activities outsourced or transferred to line managers.

Organization leaders create and sustain the official organizational culture, but different *hierarchical levels* can produce distinct subcultures. Organizational members in similar positions share similar views of the dominant culture, in part based on the power linked to hierarchical levels. Training managers often defer to the more powerful, even at the risk of offering “quick fixes” doomed to fail. To some extent, conflict between *line and staff* is a fact of organizational life, especially in circumstances of low profit margin and intense competition. Unfortunately, line managers often consider training a luxury they cannot afford because of more pressing needs. Moreover, line man-

TRAINING FAILURE... CONTINUED

agers are assuming greater responsibility for training policy and practice leading spurring doubts about training as a specialized profession.

Occupations have been described as “the most highly organized, distinctive, and pervasive sources of subcultures in work organizations are people’s occupations.” Members of strong occupational cultures develop shared values, beliefs, and norms and may achieve substantial autonomy and deference from members of other subcultures. For example, because of their rigorous education, difficult certification process, and meticulous performance measures, most engineers are neither willing nor expected to compromise professional ethics and standards just to please members of other groups. A profession’s strength is linked to issues such as “exclusive ownership of an area of expertise and knowledge and the power to define the nature of problems in that area as well as the control of access to potential solutions.”

Ill-conceived or poorly executed programs reflect more than incompetence or unwillingness. Training failure can be a manifestation of the values, beliefs, and assumptions shared by members of various levels of organizational culture. Beliefs that training is simple, unimportant, or pointless generate behaviors such as employing incompetent trainers, rejecting the recommendations of competent trainers, discouraging transfer of learning to the job, and failing to recognize positive transfer. Cultural barriers can circumvent the best-designed program.

STUDY ABROAD...CONTINUED



From left to right: the ESC Toulouse building, the Japanese Gardens near the school; the grounds around St. Sernin.



Margarita Almeda is an MBA student specializing in Human Resource Management and International Business.

saw three of their A380 planes being assembled. Furthermore, a spokesperson from Airbus gave a lecture on the company’s history.

The study abroad program provided the students with another perspective in marketing and human resources. The European professors’ viewpoints seem to drive the point home for the students. In the current business environment, developing a global outlook should prove to be an invaluable advantage.

IN FOCUS: STUDENT CHAPTER OF SHRM

The student chapter of the Society for Human Resource Management at Georgia State University earned superior merit recognition for the 2006-2007 school year from the national organization. Led by Tracy Bachman, formerly Tracy Hall, as she got married earlier this year, the student organization demonstrated its commitment to serving the students who are interested in the HR field.

The new officers for the 2007-2008 school year are equally excited about the new year. The new president, Margarita Almeda, states, "We are looking forward to building upon what Tracy and Kevyn [Fitzgerald] had done." Indeed, the chapter is off to a fast start. During the summer semester, they conducted a workshop on how to create an e-portfolio for Georgia State students, and in September, they had two guest speakers: Ike Onyejekwe, Compensation Analyst at Georgia State University, and Karen Ransom, Regional Economist at the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

On September 11, 2007, Mr. Onyejekwe, who currently works in the College of Arts and Sciences, talked about his current position with Georgia State and HR career paths. He focused his presentation on the importance of retention in an organization. Furthermore, he talked about the differences in the public and the private sectors in terms of HR practices.

Ms. Ransom was the speaker on September 27, 2007. She enlightened the participants about the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS): what they do and the reports that they publish. She talked about the surveys that they conduct, a brief introduction on the methodology and how the BLS reports differ from other databases that are available.

The officers and the other attendees are thankful to these gracious individuals who have shared their time and expertise.



From left to right: Michelle Demain, Angela Vela and Ms. Karen Ransom



Attendees of BLS meeting

We want to hear from you!

Current and previous editions of the Beebe Newsletter are available online at www.robinson.gsu.edu/beebe/newsletter. If you have any comments, suggestions, submissions, or for more information about our programs, please email the Faculty Advisor at mgtlm@langate.gsu.edu, visit the Beebe Institute website at robinson.gsu.edu/beebe/index.html, or write to:

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