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Welcome to the eleventh edition of 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.

Executive Spotlight

This is the first of several interviews that will be conducted by students with an HR executive to get their insight and viewpoints on current HR issues and trends. The series begins with an interview of **Ms. Elizabeth Ruf, Vice President, Services** at Bellsouth in November 2005 where she shared her thoughts and advice for students pursuing a career in HR. We got the opportunity to sit down with Ms. Ruf through her membership in the Georgia State University Executive Roundtable where she has been a member since 1995. Recently Ms. Ruf retired from Bellsouth after having a distinguished career at Bellsouth.

Background Information



Ms Ruf has an undergraduate degree in Education and a graduate degree in Child and Family Studies. She worked as a teacher for four years before joining Bellsouth where she began working as a clerical employee and then was quickly promoted to supervisor and then Manager of Training in Operations. Over the years she transitioned into sales and information technology systems design & training before moving into her role as the Vice President of Service Delivery.

She initially transitioned into HR because she liked managing people and understood the business. Prior to her retirement from this role she dealt with labor relations administration, employee relations, performance management, salary administration, staffing, training, sales and corporate compensation and corporate policies.

Q: What advice would you give students interested in an HR career?

A: Get to know the business first by becoming a line person; understand the culture and the customers. Understanding the business first will help build credibility. If you can't begin with a company in a sales or operations position, quickly partner with your clients to spend time with front-line employees.

Q: What surprised and challenged you most about the field?

A: The complexity of some issues. For example the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) requires a lot of knowledge and interpretation. Also I understood the external perception of HR and wanted to change it

Q: How does your organization remain abreast of current HR issues within Bellsouth?

A: We hold conference calls frequently to update our team on policy, process and other changes. We also hold at least ½ day of training twice a year for SHRM credit and provide opportunity to learn something new. In addition employees are encouraged to take either the PHR or SPHR certification exams at company cost. In 2005, BellSouth hosted the SHRM certification classes on-site to encourage employees to complete the certification.

Q: How does your organization within Bellsouth contribute to the company's success?

A: Human Resources goals are the company's goals. My goals and priorities are no different than the company's. HR is a partner in executing business strategy by identifying the people-organization fit.

Internally the team is organized by client and is assigned to work day-to-day with the clients so they can understand the clients needs and the clients have one contact person who is held accountable. They are very client-focused and receive excellent feedback from their clients.

Q: Do you have any comments on HR Outsourcing (HRO)? Does Bellsouth current outsource any HR functions?

A: Bellsouth has been outsourcing benefits for the past ten years.

Some advice for companies thinking about HR outsourcing today: understand first how things work internally today and identify and fix any internal inefficiencies. Never send someone else (in this case the outsourcer) your problems to fix. Also make sure that your company and the outsourcer are a cultural match and once an agreement is signed the company must manage the relationship. HRO should appear to be seamless to employees, supervisors and leaders.

"Best sourcing" should be done regardless of the location (offshore, local, national).

Q: Where do you think the profession is heading? What will it look like in 5-10 years?

A: HR will become strategic consultants internally with integrated outsourcers handling everything else. Companies who are able to execute this vision will be the most successful.

Q: What are your long term professional goals?

A: To eventually become an HR consultant for small businesses who are unable to have an internal department of their own but have a need for HR functions and services. This could be either in a volunteer position or on a contract basis.

In closing, **Ms. Ruf believes that** because of a track record of building relationships she became well respected within Bellsouth and as a result was able to give HR advice relative to strategic decision making. She believes in working in the field first before moving into HR to be able to understand the business.

We wish her all the best in her new endeavors!

FOCUS ON FACULTY AND STUDENTS

In this section of the newsletter we recognize accomplishments made by both students and alumni.

Promotions



Randy Patterson, a GSU Beebe alum, has been promoted to **Regional HR Director** at The Home Depot. Randy has an MBA with a concentration in HRM (2001) and a BBA with a concentration in management (1998).

"The Home Depot has truly embraced, valued, and leveraged the skills and knowledge I acquired while earning my MBA from GSU. This ability has definitely helped me get on the fast track with this great organization."

When asked about his HR education at GSU Randy stated that ...

"GSU's MBA program provided me with the opportunity to collaborate with students from varying majors, as well as diverse cultural and social backgrounds. This interaction facilitated and accelerated my understanding of how to drive HR practices throughout all aspects of business."

"Georgia State provided me with meaningful projects and passionate mentors throughout my studies. This opportunity provided me with the leadership skills and business knowledge to drive progressive HR practices in my organization" Statements regarding The Home Depot/GSU."

PhD Recipients

Debra Dookeran completed her Ph.D. in Human Resources Management. Her dissertation topic was *Perceived Organizational Support: Self-interested or Other-interested?* She is currently an Assistant Professor at Baruch University.

Mark Kunze completed his Ph.D. in Human Resources Management. His dissertation topic was *An Examination of the Linkages Between Personality, Leader-Member Exchange, and Experienced Violation of the Psychological Contract.*



PHR/SPHR Certifications

The Professional in Human Resources (PHR) and the Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR) certification exams are generalist exams based on US laws, regulations and practices. The following professionals have passed their examinations:

- PHR - Renise Francis and Marissa Lucret
- SPHR - Carlton Burroughs and Tammy Woodward

Scholarships

Renise Francis is the 2005 National Association of African Americans in Human Resources Atlanta Chapter scholarship award recipient for writing the winning essay on HR as a value center and its strategic impact.



Pictured: John Mixon, Renise Francis and William Riddick



Carlton Burroughs is the 2005 Atlanta Engineering Personnel Association scholarship award recipient for outstanding academic achievement.

Congratulations on your successes!

Notable Events

Book Award

Bruce Kaufman's book *The Global Evolution of Industrial Relations*, published by the International Labour Organization, was selected by the American Library Association's Choice magazine to be in its list of "Outstanding Academic Titles for 2005: The Best of the Best".



SHRM GSU Student Chapter

The topic of the January 25th student chapter meeting was Global HRM and the guest speaker was **William Taylor**, Senior Director of Human Resources at Evian North America, a company of Groupe Danone. He has been an HR Generalist for over 15 years and has experience in employee relations, organizational development and organizational effectiveness. Before joining Evian, Mr. Taylor was employed as an HR Generalist at Bausch & Lomb, Coca-Cola Mid Atlantic and TRW, Inc. As a consultant with Hewitt Associates in South East Asia, he served as a consultant to several multi national corporations in Asia on mergers and acquisitions, cultural change, change management and competency development.

FOCUS ON RESEARCH

Each issue features research that is especially relevant to HR practitioners. In this issue we feature a major investigation, by our own Dr. Todd Maurer, that he is conducting for the United States Army.

Leadership Development

Business executives have increasingly recognized that for organizations to be highly competitive, they must have leaders or potential leaders who voluntarily and aggressively pursue development of leadership capabilities. Organizations cannot rely solely on mandated training or learning experiences to develop leadership talent. Development must be motivated from within the person—not imposed by the organization. Despite the tremendous importance of leadership talent development for many organizations, surprisingly little is known about which worker characteristics will lead to motivation to develop leadership skills. This is because most research has been directed at predicting success at being a leader. Although they can go hand in hand, leader development and leader performance are not the same thing.

Implicit in leadership literature and practice is the notion that those individuals who want to be leaders will be motivated to develop leadership capability. However, in a research project being funded by the United States Army Research Institute, one of our faculty members, Dr. Todd Maurer, is exploring the key distinction between motivation to be a leader and motivation to develop leadership capability. According to Dr. Maurer, a person may or may not possess both of these motivations.

In this research, he will examine a variety of predictors of motivation to develop leadership capability, and distinguish them from predictors of motivation to lead. Previously Dr. Maurer and his colleagues have found that people who are highly motivated to voluntarily pursue ongoing development of their own career skills have a specific type of mindset:

- They believe in themselves as people who have what it takes to learn and develop and they are confident about their own development,
- They see real intrinsic value in development (as opposed to extrinsic benefits such as better pay),
- They are open to new experiences and challenging/difficult situations in which they may learn and expand their capabilities, they are conscientious, and
- They often perceive support for development at work from peers, supervisors and the organization in which they are employed.

In this new project focusing on leadership development, Dr. Maurer will similarly examine these kinds of factors that characterize those who seem to be drawn to involvement in employee development, along with certain personality, situational and job characteristics as predictors of leadership development. One unique focus in this research is beliefs about whether leaders are born or made (leadership 'improvability' beliefs).

It is well known that people may differ markedly in their beliefs that leaders are 'born or made.' People may possess beliefs that leadership attributes are innate and are not acquirable. That is, they may possess the 'great man' theory of leadership, so termed in the earlier part of the 20th century. According to Dr. Maurer, this kind of fundamental belief can set the stage for someone's overall motivation for leadership and development of leadership. To the extent that a person believes that leaders are born and not made, this can be a substantial impediment to developing leadership skills. While some might hold the belief that leadership capability is not acquirable, others might believe that leadership is an acquirable trait, and the skills or attributes needed for leadership can be developed.

Although Dr. Maurer says there has not been a great amount of scientific research on beliefs about the improvability of leadership capability, he asserts that "*there is a scientific basis for believing that differences in such beliefs do exist and that they can influence motivation.*" He states: "*We have already observed some effects of these beliefs in organizational settings. For example:*

- *At Sprint my colleagues and I found that managers who had greater beliefs that it is possible for people to improve their "intelligence" also were more likely to be involved in employee/management development activities following 360-degree feedback.*

- *At BellSouth we found that if employees believed it was possible to improve the skills being assessed in a performance appraisal system, they had more favorable attitudes toward the system."*

In the research project Dr. Maurer is conducting right now, he will pursue more thoroughly the scientific validation of these beliefs in leaders and potential leaders and tie the beliefs to leadership development and performance. The results of this research should provide new insights into how and why people become motivated to pursue the challenging process of ongoing leadership development, as well as tools to measure and influence this mindset.

Right now the research project is relying upon participants from across the work force using the internet, but later the project may begin to include people from specific companies with an interest in these kinds of issues. *"We might be able to partner with some companies in the Atlanta area that are interested in better understanding and measuring motivation for leadership development among managers and employees,"* says Dr. Maurer.

Organizations interested in this research may contact Dr. Todd Maurer at the Beebe Institute via email at tmaurer@gsu.edu.



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 mgtlnm@langate.gsu.edu, visit the Beebe Institute website at robinson.gsu.edu/beebe/index.html, or write to:

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