

From the Desk of Mario E. Ebanks

West Bay, Grand Cayman June 2003

Salutation:

INTRODUCTION:

- Thanks to opportunity to represent the CISHRP at this historic event this evening;
- Apologies for the absence of my VP Samantha Bennett, who is off on maternity leave with a 1-week old boy, and who is also a great supporter of this initiative;
- The Society is pleased to have been involved in promoting this successful alliance between the Personnel Training Unit along with Chichester College, the University of Portsmouth, and the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development in the U.K.
- Certainly this professional development programme for Human Resource practitioners is in keeping with the objectives of the CISHRP, which seeks to identify and support programmes of study for the certification and professional development of our members, while simultaneously advancing the standards and best practices within the human resource or human capital practice within these Islands. The area of professional certification and development of our members is one of the highest priorities of my two-year tenure of office (which ends in mid 2004);
- So, on behalf of my entire Board, and our membership, I commend the organizers and congratulate all of the graduates.

This evening, since I have been given the opportunity to speak...(to fill in for H.E. the Governor), I would like to talk for a few minutes on two topics which should be of interest to all human resources professionals, that is: the importance of promoting a “learning organization”, and the NEW HR professional serving in your organizations as a “strategic partner”.

THE LEARNING ORGANIZATION:

I have always been of the view that effective management of human resources requires the deployment of a “management by objectives” philosophy, augmented by a holistic approach which is “from the cradle to the grave”, which means that consistency and transparency must prevail throughout all areas: recruitment, performance management, professional and career development, succession planning, and retirement.

At the recent Chamber of Commerce 2nd annual Economic Forum, I presented a paper on this important subject. In the interest of time I will ask you to visit the Chamber’s website (which is www.caymanchamber.ky) to read that paper at your leisure.

But why should human resource professionals in Cayman be concerned about becoming a “learning organization”? Well, as a service economy which recruits its human resources from around the world, it is in our best interest to provide for and manage the knowledge within your organization so as to ensure increased levels of productivity and profitability.

The concept of a “learning organization” is embodied in the objectives of our Human Resources professionals Society, and this year we have clearly defined that by established two new Committees, the Workforce Excellence and the Workplace Vision 2020 committees. I would encourage all graduates to participate in our Society and become involved in such important topics.

As many of you know, the Ministry of Human Resources is seeking to introduce the Investors in People standard into Cayman’s workplace. Investors In People is a commonsense standard of “best practices” in human resources and organizational management, including learning and communication; the CISHRP is generally supportive of this initiative and I serve on the Steering Committee. The Society is also encouraging the Employment Relations Department to commission of new “manpower and skills needs survey of employers”, in order for employers to grade the skill levels of high school graduates coming into the workforce, and to inform education policy-makers of the skills which employers are demanding.

Turning now to **the “strategic business partner”**, I believe that all graduates here today are ably qualified and are one bold step closer to becoming “strategic business partners” in your organizations, by virtue of your completion on the various milestones in your professional development. In our dynamic and competitive business environment and “global village” HR professionals and practitioners must endeavour to take themselves to the next level, where they no longer belong to the antiquated model of Human Resource or Personnel manager which used to be the one who was the steward of red tape and the bearer of bad news (such as discipline or termination notices).

The new HR model is for the HR or Personnel manager to have a primary and meaningful role in the decision-making process in your organization, one who is not consulted when something goes wrong or where there is a breach of the law or best practices, but instead one who is consulted in advance of decisions being made. One who is not just a disciplinarian, instead one who is a coach, problem-solver, diplomat, motivator and communicator, and one who take a personal interest in the welfare and productivity of all employees in the organization. I encourage our graduates and all HR professionals to not just be content with knowing the human resource function, but learn as much about your organization as possible – understand its vision and mission, understand the technical aspects, and be comfortable with the language and jargon of the business and industry in which you are in. In exchange for this commitment by HR professionals, I am also challenges business owners and chief executives to also be proactive and to give HR professionals a seat at the boardroom table, so that they can play a key strategic advisory role; and at the same time I encourage business owners and executives to support HR professionals when they recommend “best practices” for adoption in our unique labour market....one is which human capital is as important as financial capital.

Graduates, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, in congratulating our graduates here today, and challenging them to step up to the front-lines in organizational innovations and strategy, I must quote what Sir Winston Churchill said many years ago when he also

faced many challenges but saw a great future ahead, “This is not the end, or the beginning of the end, but the end of the beginning”

Congratulations to the graduates and their families, and also my thanks to the various employers and co-workers who all contributed to the success of your studies.

Thank you for your attention.

Mario E. Ebanks

President 2002-04, Cayman Islands Society for Human Resource Professionals