



**Understanding how and why Human Resource Management trends become adopted and disseminated by Human Resource Practitioners.**

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## **Abstract**

This whole research project evolved to ultimately understand how and why human resource practitioners across several industries discover, adopt or implement certain human resource management trends into their industries and organisations.

Since the explosion of information technology and the effects of globalisation it was interesting to explore and discover intimate knowledge from various human resource management experts. Through exploratory research, a series of in-depth interviews were set up with several human resource (HR) directors and managers across various global companies and industries in South Africa.

This research investigated the views of these human resource experts and how various human resource trends impact and influence the human resource practitioner in this ever evolving global economy.

The outcome of this research can facilitate human resource practitioners in enhancing their knowledge and understanding in the human resource field with regards to making them more competitive in attracting, maintaining and retaining talent for their organisations, by certain human resource management trends. Furthermore, the research may provide an insightful understanding of how and why certain human resource management trends become disseminated into various organisations for the human resource manager.

## Declaration

I do declare that this is my own, unaided, research project. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Masters of Business Administration for the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any examination or degree in any other university.

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Date: 11<sup>th</sup> of November 2009

**Peter Mommsen**

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## **1 Definition and Purpose of the Research Problem**

### **1.1 Research Title**

Understanding how and why Human Resource Management trends become adopted and disseminated by Human Resource Practitioners.

### **1.2 Research Problem**

The objective of this study is to uncover how and why Human Resource Practitioners (HRP) discover or adopt Human Resource Management (HRM) trends. This study has investigated how human resource management trends are disseminated through various channels such as social networks (formal networks such as consultants and agencies) and internet research so that they may be adopted by human resource practitioners. According to Gubbins and Garavan (2005), the work of a human resource management practitioner (HRMP) is continuously evolving.

The human resource development practitioner is now expected to make a contribution to both the organisation's strategy and contribute to individual development (Caravan, Heraty, & Barnicle, 1999; Tjepkema, ter Horst, Mulder, & Scheerens, 2000). They go on to say that human resource development (HRD) practitioners are increasingly required to network and build relationships to obtain

support, resources, information and knowledge. According to Storberg-Walker & Gubbins (Aug 2007), learning and managing knowledge is significantly impacted by informal networks or different kinds of network structures that contribute to organisational improvement as well as individual development.

The Storberg-Walker & Gubbins (Aug 2007) article illustrates how a social network/capital perspective adds value to HRM.

The problem is how to identify what channels the HRP has used to acquire and execute new trends to excel in his/her position, attract and retain talent and add value to the organisations collective learnings and strategy.

### **1.3 Research Purpose**

The aim of this study is to uncover how human resource practitioners discover HRM trends. This research will present concepts of social networks and social capital to illustrate according to Storberg-Walker (2007) how they are deeply connected to contemporary HRM and the role of networks in HRM.

From a network perspective, the purpose will be to understand how human resource practitioners discover and adopt these HRM trends from various networks.

One purpose of the study will be to explain how the adoption of these trends of HRM can aid the HRP. Given that the aim of this research is to discover how HRM trends

are being communicated to HRM professionals and how these trends are being adopted. These findings will show that certain social networks or channels for knowledge distribution are more effective than others.

This information will provide the HRP with an understanding of how HRM trends are discovered and executed. It will provide insight as to why some of these particular HRM trends have been adopted by the HRP. This should assist the HRP and HRM professionals in better understanding how HRM trends can be discovered, adopted and ultimately better assist or add to their organisation's strategy. The research will assist HRM practitioners across a range of industries.

Another purpose is to understand what are the best channels and methods of the communication of HRM trends to the HRP. This will provide the HRP with the information that will give the HRP a better understanding of how and why HRM trends become disseminated through to HRM professionals across various industries. It will provide insight as to whether or not a particular channel or network is associated with the adoption or dissemination of HRM trends. It will assist the HRP in identifying what networks or channels can effectively disseminate or allow for the adoption of these crucial HRM trends. The research will assess HRM practitioners across a range of industries and show that early HRM trend adoption by HRPs' will add value to the organisation's strategy and collective leaning. The research will identify how HRM trends have been discovered by HRPs' over the past +/-10 years and how these trends were adopted.

## **2 Theory Base and Literature Review**

To address this research topic, the following literature was reviewed; Social Network Theory (SNT), Human Resources (HR), Human Resource Management (HRM), Trends, Human Resource Development (HRD), Social Network Analysis (SNA), Social Capital (SC), Knowledge Management (KM), Talent Management (TM), and Collective Learning (CL).

### **2.1 Social Network Theory**

Social network theory (SNT) according to Mouge and Contractor (2003) is defined as the study of how the social structure of relationships around a person, group, or organisation affects beliefs or behaviours. Barnes (1954) has been credited with coining the notion of social networks more than fifty years ago.

According to Storberg-Walker and Gubbins (2007) social networks and social capital have become deeply connected to contemporary human resource development.

Since there are few articles in the HRD literature that focus on the role of networks and HRD trend adoption according to Cross & Parker (2004), Gubbins & Garavan (2005), Lengnick-Hall, (2003) and Storberg (2002) there was a need to uncover some primary data and theory in this field through qualitative research, which entailed in-depth interviews with HR directors/managers and practitioners.

Therefore various social network studies were reviewed which clearly revealed that social networking has become a major means of communication and contact within today's professional environments according to Morgan (2009).

Charles Kadushin's (2004) fundamental study into basic networks speaks of open system networks; he mentions that open system networks are networks in which the boundaries are not necessarily clear, for example with the *adoption of new practices*. He also mentions how interesting these open system networks can be and that they are also the most difficult to study. He highlights that the direction of the causation is not specified. Either social change leads to polarisation of networks, or polarisation of networks leads to social change in terms of norms, values, and other social structures such as social learning.

Salvatore Parise (2007) gives a description of how these social networks can be used to help understand HRM challenges, knowledge transfer & retention and knowledge associated with job succession planning.

According to Chipp (2009) as little as 12% of South Africans have internet access, however this number will increase, so the relevance of such online social networking sites such as facebook.com (social networking site for friends and family to interact), LinkedIn (professionals use LinkedIn to recruit personnel and exchange information, ideas and opportunities) and My Space (a general social networking site focussing more around entertainment) have become some of the most effective online

channels for contacting, finding, sharing information or keeping contacts with various social, professional and international networks ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) 2009, [www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com) 2009 & [www.myspace.com](http://www.myspace.com) 2009). Literature was reviewed and collected around the effectiveness of these social and professional networking sites as a means of discovering and adopting HRM trends.

## 2.2 Human Resources

Human resources (HR) are the scarcest and most crucial productive resource that creates the largest and longest lasting advantage for an organisation. This resource resides in the knowledge, skills, and motivation of humans, is the least mobile of the four factors of production, and (under right conditions) learns and grows better with age and experience which no other reserve can. Human resources are the particular skills and abilities within a person. It is the concept of people and their potential as a resource. (BusinessDictionary.com. WebFinance, Inc. <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/human-resource.html>)

According to Mommsen, S.T. (2009) “Human resources are your most important resources within any company.”

## 2.3 Human Resource Development

Human resource development (HRD) is defined as a subsection of human resource management (HRM) which directly deals with development and training of employees. (<http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/human-resource-development-HRD.html>)

The Encyclopaedia Britannica (2009) defines HRD as talent development and retention which is part of HRM theory which was reviewed due to its process of changing an organisation, its employees, its stakeholders, and groups of people within it, using planned and unplanned learning, in order to achieve and maintain a competitive advantage for the organisation.

According to Price, G. (2008) Human resource development is central to a company's ability to innovate, improve and learn and it is these abilities that will allow a company to create value for its stakeholders on a sustainable basis.

## **2.4 Trends**

According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica and the BusinessDictionary.com (2009) a trend is a pattern of gradual change in a condition, output, or process, or an average or general tendency of a series of data points to move in a certain direction over time, represented by a line or curve on a graph.

## 2.5 Human Resource Management

According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica (2009) human resource management (HRM) is a more innovative workplace management than the traditional management. HRM techniques and trends force the managers of an enterprise to express their goals with specificity so that they can be understood and undertaken by the workforce. Encyclopaedia Britannica (2009) also states that HRM techniques, when properly practised, are expressive of the strategy, goals and operating practices of the enterprise overall. HRM is also seen by many to have a key role in risk reduction within organisations.

HRM theory was reviewed from various professionals, textbooks and databases specifically Literature by Ulrich, D, Allen, J, Brockbank, W, Younger, J & Nyman, M. (2009) who outline the importance of HRM and its different functions in an organisation. The theory evaluated various HR processes that are concerned with attracting, managing, motivating, developing and retaining employees for the benefit of the organisation.

Literature by T, Garavan (2008) focussing on the characteristics of strategic HRD and key requirements for its success, particularly the trainer's role and the contribution of strategic HRD to organisational effectiveness was reviewed.

Ulrich, Allen, Brockbank, Younger and Nyman (2009) work on Human Resource (HR) Transformation was reviewed to discover the needs for the organisation HRP to recognise HRM trends and revise HRM to be consistent with those trends.

## 2.6 Social Network Analysis

According to Cross, Parker, Prusak and Borgatti (2001), social network analysis (SNA) provides a rich and systematic means of assessing informal networks by mapping and analysing relationships among people, teams, departments or even entire organisations. They suggested that managers are often adamant that they know their organisation, yet studies are showing that they have different levels of accuracy in understanding the networks around them. Network analysis is defined by BusinessDictionary.com (2009) as the breaking down of a complex project's data into its component parts and plotting them to show their interdependencies and interrelationships.

Salvatore Parise's 2007 studies were reviewed on how social network analysis can contribute to the knowledge management (KM) efforts of human resource development professionals in organisations today.

According to Gubbins and Garavan (2005) there is importance attached to the relationship-building dimension of HRM practitioners and the ability of accessing valuable social capital. If they can focus on these factors they will be more successful in their careers and role performance. They argued that HRP's are increasingly required to network and build relationships to obtain support, resources, information and knowledge.

Salvatore Parise (2007) results were used to illustrate how SNA can aid HRM knowledge creation and innovation.

## **2.7 Social Capital**

SNA is often used to identify Social Capital (SC). According to Inkpen, A., & Tsang, E. (2005) social capital represents the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures. They go on to say that social capital is gaining reputation as a concept that presents a foundation for describing and characterising a firm's set of relationships. Their central suggestion in this outlook of social capital was that networks of relationships are a valuable resource (i.e., capital) for the individual or organisation.

## **2.8 Knowledge Management**

Knowledge management (KM) is defined by BusinessDictionary.com (2009) as strategies and processes designed to recognise, capture, structure, value, leverage, and share an organisation's intellectual assets to enhance its performance and competitiveness. KM is an incorporated set of components for gathering, storing, dispensing, and communicating knowledge.

Carter and Scarbrough (2000) suggested that the dominant discourse within the corporate environment is one that emphasises the need for organisations to leverage their “knowledge base” in order to gain competitive advantage. Knowledge management, particularly the sources of the knowledge where knowledge was discovered and adopted was uncovered in the finding of this study.

There was a need to understand how HRM information is connected to or through organisations. Parise (2007) notes the importance of understanding the connectivity among subgroups is particularly relevant when it involves different knowledge types (e.g., tacit and explicit) and knowledge tasks (e.g., search and transfer).

This study investigates what people, personal computers (PC) archives or website organisations such as the Institute of People Management (IPM <http://www.ipm.co.za> 2009) are considered to have new or relevant information that a HRP would consider as a trend or as valuable. As seen in figure 1 (Cross, R. Parker, A. Prusak, L. Borgatti, S. (2001) Knowing What We Know: Supporting Knowledge Creation and Sharing in Social Networks.) the major source of information is from *people* followed by PC archives. This already indicated that HRP had to consider networking with social & professional networks and then secondly searching through PC or web archives to accumulate and discover HRM trends.

The research project by Hall (2001) on social exchange for knowledge exchange derives from economics, rational choice theory and the study of relationships and “exchanges”. It argues that individuals evaluate alternative courses of action so that they get best value at lowest cost from any transaction completed. There are various forms of exchange theory, but they all have the same analytical concepts and assumptions in common as summarised in figure 2. Hall, H. (2001). Therefore in this study the exchange of knowledge was investigated.

From Hall’s (2001) findings it was concluded that a number of incentives motivate knowledge sharing and these fall into two broad categories: (1) straightforward reward systems and (2) organisational factors. Firms may use a combination of these factors in their efforts towards organisational learning, and may vary according to the firm’s current activities. This literature was combined with the collective learning process.

## **2.9 Talent Management**

“Talent management (TM) is simply a matter of anticipating the need for human resources, and then setting out a plan to meet it.” (Cappelli, P. (2008). Talent Management for the Twenty-First Century. *Harvard Business Review*, 86(3), 74-81.)

Cappeli (2008) goes on to mention that every talent management process in use today was developed more than half a century ago. So there is definitely room for improvement.

## **2.10 Collective Learning**

Collective learning (CL) processes involve a broad range of stakeholders. Sadler-Smith (2006) suggests that they include dyads, teams, communities, networks, organisations and whole societies. Societies such as the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM 2009 [www.shrm.com](http://www.shrm.com)) were identified as a web site where a HRP could go to discover, contribute and learn HRM information collectively. Collective learning was investigated in conjunction with social network theory.

According to Garavan and McCarthy (2008), collective learning is important to both HRD and HRM researchers and practitioners. Collective learning is a broad term and includes learning between dyads, teams, organisations, communities, and societies.

Most conceptions of collective learning highlight characteristics such as relationships, shared vision and meanings, mental models and cognitive and behavioural learning. Collective learning processes pose challenges for both HRD and HRM research and practice.

In this study, there was a need to more fully understand how collective learning processes occur, the factors that affect collective learning, and the emergent nature of collective learning. For the HRP the study challenged concerns whether collective learning can be planned, structured and managed when discovering and adopting HRM trends within organisations.

Using figure 3 (Conceptualising Collective Learning Processes in Organizations) this research project evaluated that certain learning quadrants may add more of a competitive advantage or more value depending on the structure of the organisations or industries.

According to the Institute of People Management (IPM 2009) the global economy forces Europe to be ahead on the skill side of their workers/workforce. So since some of our national education systems are failing to arm newly qualified employees locally (South Africa) with the skills that they require to keep the pace, companies must accept the challenge and improve corporate learning systems (IPM NATIONAL SURVEY – THE FUTURE OF HR IN SOUTH AFRICA 2009).

A learning organisation is defined by BusinessDictionary.com (2009) as an organisation that acquires knowledge and innovates fast enough to survive and thrive in a rapidly- changing environment.

### **3 Research Propositions**

The following propositions were drawn up for this research project:

**3.1 *Proposition 1: Keeping social networks aids HRM practitioners with the adoption of new and valuable HRM trends.***

**3.2 *Proposition 2: Understanding how and why HRM practitioners adopt HRM trends will increase the organisation's collective learning and competitiveness.***

**3.3 *Proposition 3: Accurate HRM trend adoption by HRM practitioners will add value to the organisation's strategy.***

## **4 Research Methodology**

### **4.1 Research method**

From the breadth and scope of this study, various criteria were taken into consideration. The problem had to be realistic and the resources had to be available and accessible to answer academically correct so that the problem might be well understood with the type of analysis and sample required. Ultimately these results aimed to show a clear distinction from the concepts proposed to theories that must add value to the business world (Chipp, K. (2009). Lecture notes, GIBS, University of Pretoria)

A qualitative research method was used which incorporated a series of in-depth interviews with seven HRM professionals and several experts from the corporate and private sectors.

This research paper continuously tried to confirm by using this descriptive study, what knowledge would allow South African and international HR Practitioners the ability to understand how best to discover, learn and adopt HR trends. The research includes in-depth interviews and discussions with various human resource practitioners from various industries. (See Appendix 1 - List of industries evaluated.)

According to Thomas Tan Tsu Wee (2001) there are two primary methods for conducting research, which can be broadly classified as qualitative and quantitative research methodology. He also mentions that qualitative research is a body of techniques that goes beyond the initial stage of a study and is often seen by many researchers and clients as conclusive in its own right.

Authors such as Zikmund (1996) saw qualitative or exploratory research as the initial research conducted to clarify and define the nature of a problem. For the method of data collection in this study, qualitative research was used to clearly define these problems. Qualitative techniques such as in-depth interviews and focus group discussions are very sophisticated indeed, drawing from the disciplines of psychology, sociology and anthropology to provide illuminating insights and ideas especially in the areas of advertising research, new product development and as inputs for strategy and repositioning studies.

The research process considered that the problem was unclear to a degree (Ambiguity) so exploratory research was conducted to clarify this ambiguity whereby this measure might predict a future event or correlate with a criterion measure administered at a later time according to Zikmund (2003). Therefore exploratory research was used to investigate and understand a deeper meaning within this study.

By analysing and evaluating secondary data such as website research methods, social network theory and HRM by collective learning, this research looked at knowledge creation and sharing in social networks presented by Cross, Parker, Prusak and Borgatti (2001). The research will not try to understand what the HRP perception is of social networks but will focus on how and why the HRP is discovering and adopting HRM trends.

## **4.2 Unit of analysis**

The unit of analysis with regards to the level of investigation entailed collecting primary data from various HRM departments of various companies across various industries. Human resource directors, managers or practitioners were randomly contacted, selected and interviewed as the unit and focus of analysis in conjunction with the guidance from the Gordon Institute of Business Science supervisors and recruitment industry professionals for this study.

## **4.3 Population of relevance**

The universe for this research was human resource practitioners, specifically HR directors of multinational companies. The population was made up of participants in the HR field who were identified as the HR director, manager or practitioner within these companies. As a researcher I conformed to the code of ethics where I undertook to protect the right of confidentiality for both the organisation and the

interviewees who were interviewed or investigated in this research (Chipp, K. (2009). Lecture notes and lectures, GIBS MBA, University of Pretoria).

#### **4.4 Sampling method and size**

The sample was made up of various HR directors/managers/practitioners from within the business Mecca of South Africa – Johannesburg (mainly within the Ekurhuleni). (Helen, H. 2009) Unique Personnel (Pty) Ltd allowed access to its database of clients for the purpose of this research. Unique Personnel has a data base of more than 3500 clients HR departments contact details.

Qualitative research was specifically used so that the data of these in-depth interviews could be intensely reviewed, so that a wealth of insight could be obtained and analysed from these specialists in the HR field.

A sample of seven human resource managers from various industries formed the landscape for this research methodology to gain this further insight or verification into the HR field (Chipp, K. (2009). Lecture notes, GIBS, University of Pretoria). Zikmund (2003) notes in actual practice the sample should be drawn from a list of population elements that is often somewhat different from the target population that has been defined.

The sample frame was drawn by the author and particular emphasis or efforts was given to the following points:

- All the literature reviewed was aligned to the several industries and interviews with HR directors/managers or practitioners for this study (see Appendix 1),
- Discussions took place with academic experts in the recruitment field (Morgan, H. (2009) Unique Personnel, Web database. South Africa, [www.unique.co.za](http://www.unique.co.za)) to fully understand and question the several human resource directors, managers or practitioners that were interviewed,
- Input from several research supervisors was requested and other HR surveys were evaluated in conjunction with this study.
- Lastly, Input from other managers and colleagues from corporate or private organisations was reviewed and evaluated for this study.

#### **4.5 In-depth interview design**

The in-depth interview was designed to collect observational data by using semi-structured interviews for this research. The design was organised around a set of predetermined open-ended questions and points so that other valuable questions might emerge from the dialogue between interviewer and interviewee.

Semi-structured in-depth interviews are the most widely used interviewing formats for qualitative research. (DiCicco-Bloom, B. Crabtree, B.F. (2006), Blackwell Publishing Ltd 2006. MEDICAL EDUCATION 2006; 40: 314–321)

#### **4.6 Data Collection and Data Analysis**

According to Wee (2001) the starting phase of the research process deals with the need to understand the background for the research including the purpose of the study, how much is already known, what further secondary data is needed and the setting up of hypotheses or propositions for testing or evaluation in the primary research. The data collected from the in-depth interviews was recorded and reproduced where word associations, sentence completion, personification and third person technique tools were used to analyse the primary data collected from these various and random expert in-depth interviews, with seven HR professionals across several industries.

According to Zikmund (2006) it is a master plan that specifies the methods and procedures for collection and analysing needed information. There was some secondary data collected to cover various theories initially, so that this study could be well prepared leading up to the multiple in-depth interviews and hence intimately understand the HR directors/managers or practitioners expert responses.

Primary data collected included verbatim notes and transcribed recordings of interviews, jotted notes and detailed field notes of observational research and reflective notes made during the in-depth interviews. According to Pope and Mays (2000) transcripts and notes are the raw data of the research. They provide a descriptive record of the research, but they cannot provide explanations. The researcher has to make sense of the data by sifting and interpreting them. (Second edition of *Qualitative Research in Health Care*, edited by Catherine Pope and Nicholas Mays, published in 2000 by BMJ Books)

Zikmund (2003) describes probing as verbal prompts made by the researcher to motivate the respondent to enlarge and explain an answer. For this research this interviewing tactic was used extensively to probe a deeper response from the respondents. This was largely due to the fact that the respondents often needed stimuli to expand or clarify their own answers and ideas more broadly, so that a broader understanding could be more easily reached later on in the findings of this study.

The five stage data analysis framework approach was used when analysing the primary data of this study, developed in Britain according to Pope and Mays (2000) as seen in the following table 1.



<p>1. <i>Familiarisation</i>—immersion in the raw data in order to list key ideas and recurrent themes</p>
<p>2. <i>Identifying a thematic framework</i>—identifying all the key issues, concepts, and themes. Drawing on prior issues and questions derived from the aims and objectives of the study as well as issues raised by the respondents themselves and views or experiences that recur in the data. The end product of this stage is a detailed index of the data, which colour codes and labels the data manageable for retrieval and exploration</p>
<p>3. <i>Indexing</i>—applying index systematically to all the data by annotating the transcripts with numerical/colour codes from the index.</p>
<p>4. <i>Charting</i>—rearranging the data according to a related framework of charts/findings/recurrent themes.</p>
<p>5. <i>Mapping and interpretation</i>—using the charts/findings to define concepts create typologies and find associations between themes with a view to providing explanations for the findings. This process will be influenced by the original research objectives as well as by the themes that have emerged from the data themselves.</p>

Table 1: The five stage data analysis framework approach (Pope, C. Mays, N. (2000). *Qualitative Research in Health Care, BMJ*, 320:114-116)

#### 4.7 Research Limitations

Research limitations included aspects such as the sample size, time frame of research, inability to detect changes over time and financial limitations. The fact that this research was designed to identify “trends” means new trends may have been overlooked during or towards the end of this study.

There may also be a lack of new information collected to verify the accuracy of the study. There are also the limitations of companies not allowing their HR directors/managers to speak openly. There was also the limitation of the HRP not answering all the questions due to the possibility of revealing trade secret information that may be seen as confidential to that organisation.

Interviewer bias, response error and non response error was noted and effort went into avoiding these limitations. During the interviews there may also be the possibility of auspices bias and deliberate falsification according to Chipp (2009).

## 5 Results

### 5.1 Introduction

For the recording of the in-depth interview's data a hand held digital Sony "ICD-SX35 Recorder" was used accompanied with a black pen and a note pad. The average length of one of the interviews was twenty three minutes and eighteen seconds (23.18min.). The in-depth interviews covered several industries. The industries may be viewed in the appendixes of this study under appendix 1.

The several in-depth interviews took place over a three month period. 85.70% of the interviewees held positions of HR director within their companies and represented HR at board level within their organisations, the remaining interviewees held the title of HR manager within their company.

The combined HR experience of all the interviewees is 146 years. With an average of 20.86 years of experience per HRP within the HRM field. 85.70% of the interviewees had a minimum qualification of either an honours or masters within the HR field. The remainder of the interviewees held a degree. In total the combined amount of employees these HR practitioners administrated or managed during the month of October 2009 was nineteen thousand three hundred and eighty six (19 386) employees within the boundaries of South Africa with an average of two thousand

seven hundred and sixty nine (2769) employees per HR director/manager or practitioner.

All of the HR practitioners who were interviewed for this study worked within global companies. Due to the availability and time constraints of South African HR directors the study only received an actionable response below 35% from the interview request form. The application form may be seen in the appendixes of this study under appendix 2.

## **5.2 Aggregated key themes**

After applying the five stage data analysis framework approach (See table: 1) to the data the following findings were most prominent and consistent from the transcriptions of the in-depth interviews. The findings were also consistent with the various other discussions with HR professionals and colleagues. A structure and sequence flow of the interview questions used may be viewed in the appendixes under appendix 3.

Actual quotes from the interviewees are listed to back the key themes that surfaced from the in-depth interviews. All interviewee quotes can be seen in italics which can be seen in the following aggregated key themes of this research paper.

### 5.2.1 Culture

Culture and the global gap between corporate cultures was one of the highlights of the findings.

*“So HR’s role was also to try and bridge that gap. And my role was to try and bring the two together, I had to try and be neutral and not be seen to be forming part of any group.”*

Change management and changing the organisations culture has become another function of the HRP.

*“Our biggest HR challenge, probably the change management part and to change the culture. As you know, you don’t change culture immediately, it’s a process.”*

### 5.2.2 Talent management

From the study there was a constant sense that talent management is a current and important trend in the HRM field globally.

*“Globally I would say talent management... I’m not talking about talent management only for recruitment. So you need to have a strategy revolving around talent management. Globally, most of the companies have now realised that we need to*

*look after our people – from entry to... you know, the employee life cycle as well and what do we have in place to ensure that”.*

A key aggregated interview question: “Do you as a HRP or as a HRM department regard talent management as an important trend in the HRM?”

100% of the respondents replied yes or agreed strongly with the statement.

Talent management was by far the most common discussed point throughout most of the in-depth interviews.

*“So what we would do is we identify people who we regard as high level skill and people who are seen as high flight risk for whatever reason, then HR staff must embark on an engagement discussion with these candidates and depending on their needs must deal with them accordingly to retain that talent.”*

The HRP’s mention work/life balance and wellbeing management for top candidates depending on each candidates own needs.

*“We remunerate them differently. We’ve also given them shares we call it our retention package.”*

*“Yes, but it’s not one size fits all - it’s salary benefits, business exposure, on job training and executive development programmes and we also offer our employees shares”.*

Here are a few of the respondents elaborating on Talent management.

*“It would be person specific. So what we would do is... all people that have high levels or who we regard as key and then there’s other people who are not in that top bracket but there are people who might be high-flight risk for whatever reason. We would embark on an engagement discussion with them and depending on their needs we would deal with them accordingly. So some might be money, some might be training, some might be changing jobs, some might be promotions, some might be love and care, some might be overseas trips... so it’s not a one size fits all.”*

The interviewees highlight the importance of having the skill and resources to identify, attract and retain talent.

*“We identified three people last year so that they could go for assessment overseas”.*

*“We do know who our core people are.”*

*“They’re in critical position and they’re in an executive development programme with GIBS.”*

Talent management seems to be the most important theme for all the HRP's within this study.

*"I think one of the biggest challenges is talent management. I think within that, one of the things that people are getting really hooked on is engagement. I think people are getting involved with the high performance culture and trying to grapple with that and what high performance organisations are all about and trying to emulate that. I think work/life balance becomes an issue, especially with the new generation."*

High-flight risk people were identified by the HRP's as individuals who are skilled and would need some specific individual attention, incentives or focus to avoid their leaving the organisation.

*"We have strong engagement approaches across the business but where we find people who are specifically high-flight risk or people who have high value... we might give a bit of extra focus to those people, so we target them. It would be person specific"*

The respondents highlighted that talent management has become a global task.

*"Globally, most of the companies have now realised that we need to look after our people – from entry to... you know, the employee life cycle as a whole as well and what do we have in place to ensure that"*

### 5.2.3 HRM strategy and corporate strategy

The interviewees highlighted the importance of aligning the HR strategy with the corporate strategy and the importance of how to manage this function effectively throughout the organisation. This is clearly a HRM trend amongst all the organisations' HRPs.

*“We look at the bigger picture – we look at the business, we look at the strategy and we look at where we want to be and we look at those key positions – we do a key position map and then after we’ve identified our key position map, which is based on the business analysis that we’ve done... to say, you know, for the next three years this is where we are going to be. How do we make sure that between us and our customer it becomes a win-win situation and then we say...these are the positions we need to go forward. Do we have the right people for those positions; do we have successors for those positions? If not, then we’d come up with interventions to close the gap.”*

Key aggregated interview question: “Is the HR strategy aligned with the corporate or management strategy?”

100 % of respondents replied yes. *“Of course it is.”*

Aggregated interview question: “How do you feel about HR becoming more of the core strategy department of the organisation in the future?”

Response: *“Over my years it’s certainly become more and more relevant.”*

*“Our company previously represented at the board level...it’s long already that the HR has been seen as an integral part of the business, so I’m sure we’ll maintain that position.”*

*“I would say that we spend the money. I think it’s grown to be honest, a couple of years ago HR was seen singularly as an overhead... an expense that we needed. That has changed. But what has changed with it is that from a certain level upwards and certainly on the executive level, there’s a huge appreciation for the role that we are playing.”*

*“The HR Strategy is to do much more analysis of the competence gap between what we have right now and where we want to take the business in terms of our growth strategies – locally and internationally; and obviously to then assist in bridging those competence gaps.”*

*“You’re aligning strategy with people and you need to know exactly what the core business is and also knowing exactly what people do, their exact job. If people ask you, you need to be able to describe it word for word. South Africa has picked up that there is a huge gap in terms of HR skill.”*

*“I think that is the trend in that HR is really moving from the personnel factor to a business partnering. So you’re not only there to do the admin, you’re also there to assist the business make profit.”*

*“Dave Ulrich... I still think he’s the best in terms of moving HR from an administrative way of doing things and to change it to being a business partner.”*

*“I think for me personally it’s to help the sales guys make their NSV – National Sales Volume.”*

Aggregated interview question: “Is the HR department going to grow with importance in the organisation in the future?”

Response: *“Definitely, I think part of that decision making... if you say representation on the board level... not that we’re part of the... well I’m part of the executive team. So you align the different business strategies there with ours. So I think that the change is that they definitely became a more strategic partner and that you actually should not be... we always said that we don’t generate money, it’s definitely possible in the HR department now.”*

*“HR Strategy, if you get that right at the right time, then you can see strategy being impacted much more vigorously than just a blanket approach to people. So I think it is specific people at the right time in the right roles, making the right decisions. So that can fundamentally alter the direction of a business, so it’s improving the business*

*decision making at the right time. When the realisation is that people drive that and not so much product or process or even technology to a lesser extent, then the right people arena would gain importance. I think that's where we are going. I think the future is positive for this industry, for this space but I think it needs to be much more focussed and specifically oriented on business challenges and business growth opportunities and much less the generalist or blanket approach"*

*"We're important in so far that there is a very strong understanding by line management of the role that HR plays in this business."*

Aggregated interview question: "Is HRM adding to your competitive advantage?"

*"HR is going to add more value to competitive advantage and strategy going forward; I think yes, worldwide I think yes."*

#### **5.2.4 HR innovation**

Innovation was another topic that frequently came up, specifically innovation within the HR department.

*"All over, there are a number of places where we have R&D centres. We used to call the drive TDR – Tear down and Re-engineer. The idea of the TDR projects was to*

*save on time, improve efficiency and you actually save costs. I think innovation for me should be about that – to say, you know this is the value that we would add to the business.”*

*“We’re not looking at only training and development, but we’re fortunate because we’re global so we can also look at mobility... from entry to retirement or to staff leaving, so that they really enjoy being with the company.”*

The HRP’s had to identify what is innovative within the HR department or organisation.

*“We do have champions for innovation... they must be innovative and add value to the organisation.”*

*“Innovation I’d say 4 out of 5, I think we’ve got great systems going”*

### **5.2.5 HR metrics**

The results also identified the importance of measuring HRM processes and individuals.

*“As a H.R. practitioner, you should be able to say... this is the value I’ve added to these people to make sure they deliver and this is the monetary value. You can work it out based on their salary, turnover, performance, targets etc.”*

*“We’ve got a performance management system that’s linked to our KPI.”* (Key Performance Indicators)

The results also showed that these functions were often outsourced because of how important they were to the HR department.

*“Outsourcing HR metrics, we use a company called \*\*\*\*\* who specialise in all the human capital modules – essentially that’s talent/performance/career management and learning and development – linking all of those together.”*

There was even a trend by the respondents to cancel certain ERP metric systems because of their lack of adaptability and technicality for the organisation or industry. There was a substantial focus on what HRM software or ERP system was being used.

*“We’re ruling out the Oracle system with their module on human capital intelligence.”*

The HRP’s identified the impotence of frequency of the metrics/reports.

*“On a monthly basis we provide the metrics.”*

*“On a weekly basis we analyze HR metrics”*

The HR metrics and scorecards were also prevailing in the open ended question responses.

*“I love them, they help me focus”. “To really manage change especially in terms of where they have been instilled practises”*

#### **5.2.6 Knowledge management**

It was evident that all the organisations HRPs’ felt the KM was absolutely a precondition for the company to function and grow.

Key aggregated interview question: “Do you or does your HRM department make use of HRM ERP (enterprise resource planning) systems or software?”

100% of the respondents replied “yes”.

*“We have a human capital management system which is a data/software based system which integrates all of our talent management practises, so its competency based... from recruitment to performance management to career management to*

*ultimately understanding your talent pools, that's all on one human capital management system."*

*"That's becoming important. We're putting it in place. Well I mean we've got methods of developing people all across the whole business, it's not just HR specific."*

*"We have a process of development in our architecture around development based outcomes learning and development which applies across our whole business".*

*"So yes, we do but it's not specific to HR obviously the content and the focus would be specific to HR but the processes are not".*

*"Yes, we have an Intranet, but KM data does not count, we need to write information so it adds value to the organisation. So I think we use human information capital management, so that restructuring happened."*

### **5.2.7 Social networking**

Key aggregated question: "Do you or does your HRM department use social networks to discover trends in the HRM field?"

85.71% of the respondents relied "yes".

*“Yes, social and professional networks”*

*“\*\*\*\*\* also has a human capital management forum of all our companies. So where we have interest in other organisations, we get together probably every quarter and we have discussions on certain topics. We’ve had one on engagement recently.”*

*“So its companies that are part of the group – we get together.”*

*“So there are peers from different industries and we all get together and share information, so I keep up to date like that.”*

Internal and external networks were often discussed by the HRPs’.

*“Networking and speaking to peers in the industry is important.”*

*“We keep internal social networks with partners and employees”*

*“We are constantly networking, social networking and liaising with different institutions.”*

*“Now we’re also trying to form relationships with the University of Johannesburg and the University of Pretoria and then see if we can try and implement internships to create talent.”*

*“We established an internal social network forum, we call it an employee forum and the purpose of us establishing a forum was to make sure that there is a complete buy-in from the employees.”*

*“Yes, also word of mouth. We know this is a small industry and we know who is good where. I know whom to tap in terms of getting the right talent.”*

*“I keep social networks and professional networks”*

### **5.2.8 Collective Learning**

Learning and sharing knowledge throughout the organisation was seen as another HRM trend by the HRP's.

*“We can have structures in place, even if we formalise that, to make sure that each and every division are meeting and discuss information”*

*“So E-learning will make us a global company – I like that.”*

*“We identified three people last year so that they could go for assessment overseas, there they share their knowledge and they bring back what other people or other countries are doing”*

*“I think we’re fortunate in that we work with \*\*\*\*\* which is an international company.”*

*“You know, for the next six months, we’re going to Paris and we’re going to share information and then come back with new knowledge.”*

*“Obviously people who’ve joined us bring best practise from their previous organisation”*

*“Our organisation is a learning one, our organisation learns and retains the knowledge that any individuals have brought to the table. Obviously an individual will take their way of doing things and their relationship style... the software, less tangible stuff with them but as far as learning’s and knowledge that we’ve gained through experiences... we try to make that our learning, so when individuals leave we don’t have this big void as we did in the past, so that’s definitely a key strategy around creating a more systemic learning organisation.”*

*“We try push line management cooperation... so best practises by collaborating HR and line management”*

*“That guy there, sitting there and above him, his managing director – those guys have a lot of appreciation for the role of HR and those guys are skilled in HR themselves.”*

*“There are people who are located at central office whose sole job is to feed you information and to develop new trends, they develop the trends. Best practise etc. and they feed it back to you, they compile it and give it back to you. It’s outstanding.”*

*“We had to develop a learning and development strategy starting with the basics.”*

*“Knowledge share within the organisation... I’ve got it listed as internal communication. We do have what we call ETD – Execution through Discussions on a monthly basis. It’s more the knowledge management how. That information will be disseminated to different stakeholders and the custodian of that information must come up with the intelligence and the learning’s so that it can be communicated throughout the organisation.”*

*“I’ve got a few managers in various African countries. Every second week we have our conference call, where we would be sharing knowledge... the objective would be to improve communication, share ideas, look at best practises, discuss and streamline some of their HQ priorities as well. It’s working wonderfully and we’re in a \*\*\*\*\* industry so communication for us is quite important. Even management becomes easier... you find a lot of people who are based in South Africa but reporting solid line to someone who is in Paris.”*

There was also some concern about what information or understanding was happening within these organisations with regards to miss communication amongst employees.

*“I assessed all the service people in terms of their personality and what shocked me was that when I did a comparison I looked at their manager and I looked at them... there was a big gap. Priorities are bit skew here – the manager is saying... for this position, this is where we need to be and his staff is saying... for me, this is how I need to be. The employees seem to be non dominant and all the manager come across as very dominating.”*

### **5.2.9 HRM transformation**

The practitioners stressed the importance of transforming and aligning HRM with the corporate strategy or goals of the organisation.

*“Transforming HR into a strategic partner is very important”*

*“I think that is the trend in that HR is really moving from the personnel factor to a business partnering. So you’re not only there to do the admin, you’re also there to assist the business make profit.”*

*“Restructuring of organisation strategy with HR alignment... So when the organisation strategy is changing, the trend is... is to aligning the HR”*

*“HR is aligned with the corporate strategy. Our corporate strategy talks about transformation – so transformation is no longer just about people, at HR it's important in terms of changing the mindset within the organisation. Our strategy talks about protecting the core of our strategy and optimisation.”*

*“Values will never be successful if you don't link it to a specific behaviour.”*

### **5.2.10 Utilising HRM consultants and trainers**

The responses indicated that consultants and trainers were effective HRM tools.

Key aggregated interview question: “Do you or does your HRM department use external training providers/consultants?”

85.71% of the respondents agreed or replied yes.

*“You must remember it's a very high tech environment. It will be training companies, different consultants, but it's definitely not only one”*

*“We've got a lot of in-house but we also get some external.”*

*“I've currently got 20 experts and they're coming from everywhere. Not only from Paris, some come from Katar, some come from the UK, there's two from China...”*

*“We’ve got consultants continuously coming in. Consultants doing assessments and then assisting us with career development, career pathing that type of stuff, ABET (Adult Basic Education Training). We’re trying to do a bit of a mix on it.”*

Key aggregated interview question: “Do you or does your HRM department ever deal with business schools?”

85.71% of respondents replied “yes”.

#### **5.2.11 HRM trend adoption**

The interviewees often elaborated on HRM trend adoption.

Key aggregated interview question: “How do you or does your HRM department discover HRM trends?”

*“Networking, social networking and liaising with different institutions. I’ve started liaising with \*\*\*\*\*, so my lecturer keeps me posted with new information.”*

*“We check for example global companies, what they’re doing but we also check our competitors.”*

*“Our competitors, our friends in the same field.”*

*“We subscribe to all kinds of literature for HR related stuff”*

*“Magazines - there’s the HR Future – that’s quite a powerful magazine and then companies like \*\*\*\*\* they’ve got quite good seminars.”*

*“I actually read quite a lot. I read more the leadership books and business books.”*

*“We’re also part of a global company so we’ve got people all over the world who get involved with keeping us all up to date.”*

*“We do have access to their website, we do have call-overs with them every now and again and there are meetings that are scheduled with them so we pick up on a lot of trends through them but also through researching on the Internet.”*

Key aggregated interview question: “Do you feel that your organisation is keeping up to date with current human resource management trends?”

100% of the respondents replied yes or agreed strongly with the question.

Response: “Yes, *that’s my responsibility.*”

## 5.2.12 Other HRM trends

There were other HRM trends worth mentioning that came out of the in-depth interviews. Another trend that frequently came up was that department heads and managers within these global companies already had some formal training or existing HR knowledge or qualification.

*“But those guys, whether they’re civil engineers or financial guys, they’ve got a good underlay of HR practises as well.”*

Aggregated interview question: “Do you allow/utilise home offices?”

*“There are people who have home offices.”*

*“Home offices not formally, but informally we do, meaning that... mostly with our knowledge workers, where they can start later or work from home etc. – we allow that to happen. We probably need something slightly more formalised than we currently have. With technology improvements and as traffic congestion gets worse we found that people are wanting to work from home a lot more. We allow people to go on half days if that works. It’s a case by case basis, we don’t have a standard rule but the only thing that governs it is – does the job allow it and is it suitable right now for the business, for you to operate like that.”*

There was one respondent that explained that certain trends don't always work in certain industries due to the nature of their business.

Interview question: "Setting up home offices... do you see anything like that happening?"

*"No definitely not. I think it depends on what kind of industry, what kind of business. But it's not possible in this industry."*

Interview question: "Do you have flexible (flexi) time?"

*"Depending on your level and depending on the maturity. So we don't have a policy around it but the practise is there."*

It was interesting to see that there was a trend for HRP's to be a registered psychologist. 42.86% of the interviewees had some registration or qualification as a psychologist.

*"I'm a registered psychologist"*

Another trend that came across thick was how to make your company more attractive.

*"We are doing that, we've just entered the best company to work for"*

Succession planning was noted quite often by the respondents as a HRM trend.

Succession planning was also seen to often have a negative impact.

*“Succession planning is also no longer a competitive advantage; it can also be a threat because the more you develop your people, the more they get market awareness.”*

*“I think that traditionally, HR was probably more focused on the tactical side. It was purely administration... payroll etc. and I think that has changed in HR.”*

*“In South Africa we’re catching up with the realisation that business success is largely driven through the right human competence. People are always saying, senior executives are always saying people are an important asset but for me its understanding which competencies in those people is the most important at the right time.”*

## **6 Discussion of results**

### **6.1 Introduction discussion**

It must be noted that due to the depth of theory around HRM, and the time constraints around these research interviews, this study could not truly identify from the findings why HRM trends were adopted. However there was evidence to suggest how certain HRM trends were adopted or disseminated.

There were various HRM trends that came up in this study. Many could be regarded as HRM techniques or theories that have been rejuvenated either because of a global phenomenon like the increased speeds of the internet, the current recession or just because an old trend or practice seems to be working better within these ever transforming HRM departments and organisations.

One of the key highlights of the findings was the HRP was constantly trying to keep up to date with HRM trends. All the respondents felt that this was one of their functions and was something that they do on a daily basis whether it was via sharing knowledge internally or finding knowledge externally. The respondents discovered new HRM knowledge from a number of sources mainly through speaking to other people within that industry/organisation such as professionals, colleagues and friends or from professional social networks.

## 6.2 Conclusions

The following conclusions were uncovered from the research.

### 6.2.1 Culture

The findings conclude that the HRP has a pivotal role to play in the shaping and continuous reshaping of the organisations culture in their global business environments.

There seems to be additional roles that the HRP has had to fill within these global companies. One of these roles is now having to bridge these culturally differences between different offices in different countries/regions. During meetings or teleconferencing meetings the HRP has had to take on the role as the “middle man” or peace keeper during these meetings or conferences.

Creating a high-performance culture is clearly one of the highest priorities. The present recession is creating additional pressure on most companies to perform or survive. These pressures have risen with the recession deepening in conjunction with competitive pressures from international companies rising. The respondents highlighted that this was difficult due to the persistent technical skills shortages and the generally low skills base in the country.

Aycan, Kanungo, Mendonca, Yu, Deller, and Stahl (2000) indicate that managing human resources and the organisations culture requires the understandings of both the influences of the internal and external environments of organisations.

The trend that was uncovered here was that the HRP must have the ability to understand and connect different cultures within the organisation to increase the organisation's collective and cross learning.

### **6.2.2 Talent management**

According to the results not just global companies but any competitive company must identify what HRM trend best suites their company or industry and transform the company in to an organisation that global talent will be attracted to. HRPs' are doing this by implementing these tested HRM trends within their organisations as fast as possible.

*“Globally, most of the companies have now realised that we need to look after our people”*

The fact that talent management was identified as one of the biggest trends just highlights the fact that talent is becoming a key driver toward a company's competitive advantage as we move more into this void of global business.

Carter and Scarbrough (2001) agree that HRM function within the organisation must pay careful attention to the management of its employees.

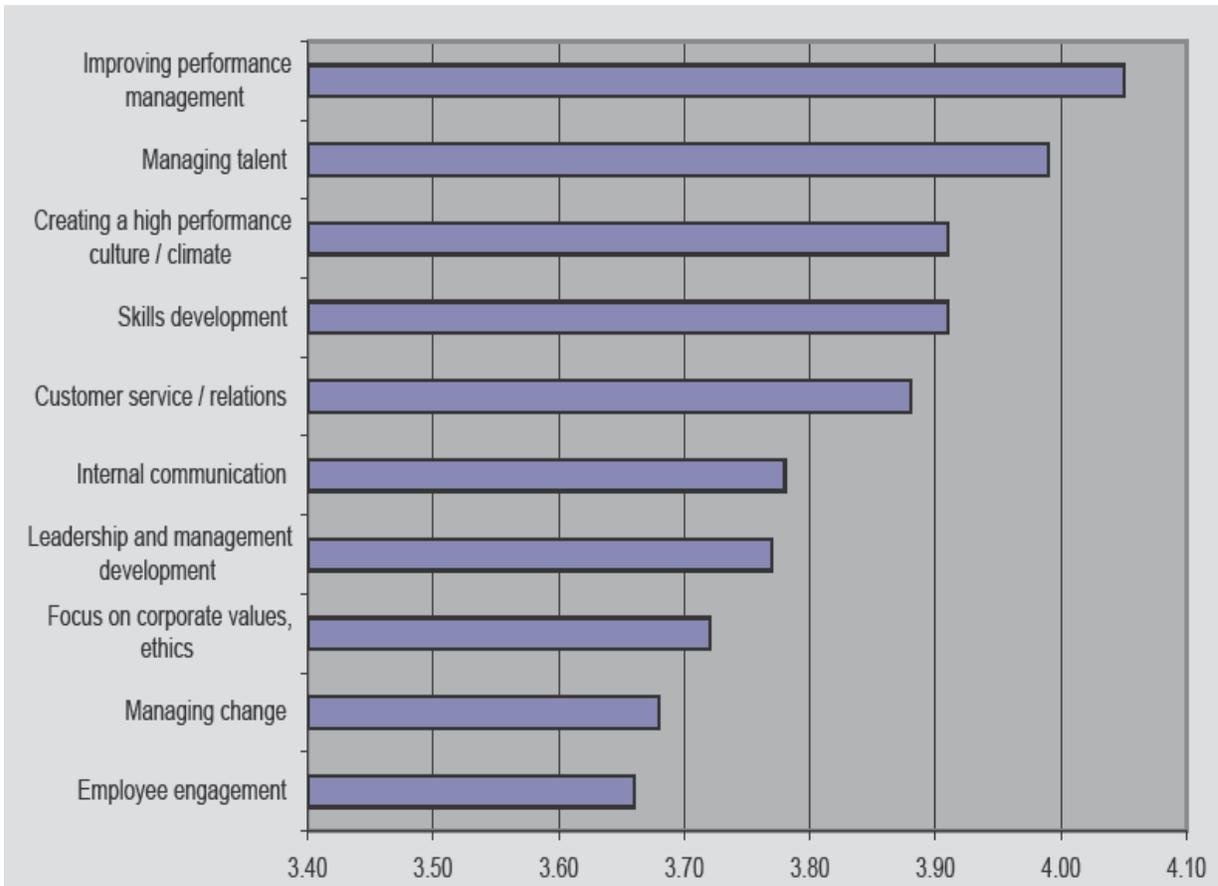
The HRP must manage work/life balance and wellbeing for these candidates depending on each individuals own needs.

According to Frank & Taylor (2004) “A looming demographic time bomb will make talent management a key priority for companies.” so the real battle will be to attract, develop, retain and motivate talent.

The interviewees highlighted the importance of creating an attractive company and by having the resources necessary to identify, attract and retain talent. Talent management entails that the HRP must set retention strategies for their talent. The trend here is that talent does not want to be managed. The higher the level of talent the more freedom and flexi time the HRP must allocate to them.

*“These top end guys don’t want to be managed”*

Talent management is fast becoming the number one priority for HR in South Africa, ranking in just behind improving performance management, as shown by Crous (2009) in the latest HR survey in South Africa by Knowledge Resources.



**Figure 4: Priority Areas for HRM – General overview.**

(Crous, W. (2009) South African HR Survey by Knowledge Resources (Pty) Ltd)

As seen from the survey in South Africa managing talent is fast becoming the number one trend. The talent management process begins from the initial step of attracting talent and one way of doing this, this study suggested, was by making your company more attractive. As one of the respondents mentions entering the best company to work for.

*“We’ve just entered the best company to work for”*

It was also evident from all the respondents that there was some kind of retention strategy in place in their organisation, specifically to retain their key talent or personnel by engaging and offering them tailored or person specific retention packages.

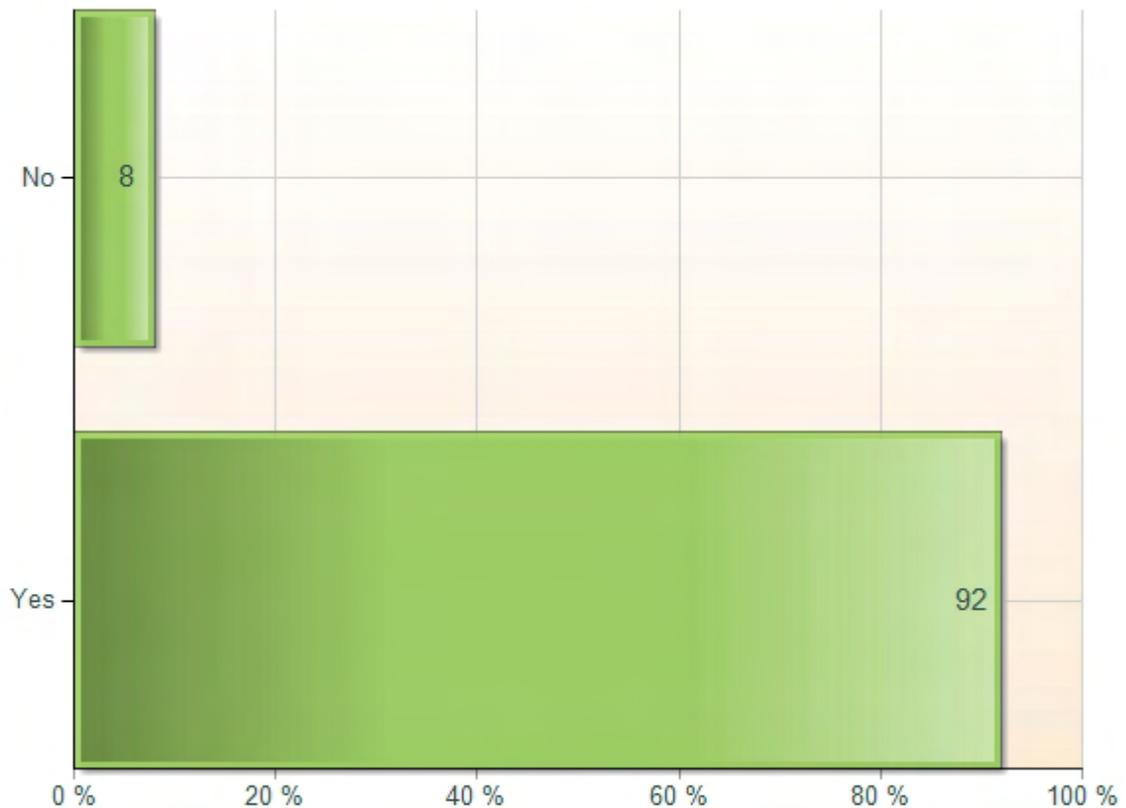
According to Frank and Taylor (2004) the future for turnover and employee retention will be mainly employee retention as the number one priority of HR executives. Retention rates will assume a prominent position in company annual reports. Leaders and top executives will be held responsible for the retention of employees. All managers will be rewarded for their retention rate undertakings. A generous part of training budgets will be committed to equipping leaders with the talent to be valuable retention leaders. Some leaders will be elected based upon retention leadership skills.

Despite the adverse economic conditions, organisations realize that survival, growth and being sustainable can be achieved only by having the right talent on board. Retaining the talent is another major challenge. So if HRPs can identify and adopt what talent management trend or technique best suites their organization or industry they will be able to add value to their organisation.

### **6.2.3 HRM strategy and corporate strategy**

The evidence concluded that the organisations HR strategy was aligned and is adding value to the organisations or corporate strategy. This trend is not only seen

globally but also according to the Crous's (2009) South African HR survey conducted for Knowledge Resources more than 92% of the respondents felt that the HR strategy was aligned with the corporate strategy.



**Figure 5:** *Is the HR Strategy Aligned with Corporate / Management Strategy?*

(Crous, W. (2009) HR SURVEY. Knowledge Resources (Pty) Ltd)

Therefore it is conclusive that this study accurately confirms that HRM is making a strategic contribution to the corporate strategy. The study also revealed that HRM has been accepted as a strategic partner and that HR will further grow in importance in the organisation.

#### 6.2.4 HR innovation

The findings conclude that the various organisations were placing a great emphasis on trying to create environments whereby, through the management of people, creativity was allowed to thrive. The findings highlighted the importance of being able to develop or test certain HRM trends often through KM systems so that the HRP could accurately adopt the HRM trend/s that may add value to their organisation. The HR departments all had some kind of ERP system or software in place to assist the HRP in collective learning, managing talent or measuring feedback/data.

Hall (2001) notes that there are relationships between job demand and innovative work behavior and that knowledge sharing will contribute to the innovative process.

The findings also showed that the HRP must allow and reward innovation within the organisation and that the HRP must be creative and innovative which often meant transforming certain internal aspects of the business to attract talent.

According to Garavan (2007) firms pursuing innovative strategies generally strive to create change and build capacity for change within.

The conclusions with regards to HR innovation show that the whole process of HRM must be creative and innovative to attract and retain talent. Furthermore the HRP must be able to share knowledge throughout the company fast and effectively to develop and maintain key talent. The HRP is therefore learning swiftly, continuously

and collectively within his/her organisations by being innovative, effective and competitive which will add value to the corporate strategy of the corporation.

### **6.2.5 HR metrics**

The results identified the importance of measuring HRM processes to see if these processes were effective moving forward or if they should be disregarded. So not only do the HRPs' have to measure personnel and give feedback but also measure processes or techniques that they are considering adopting. According to the results the HRP has had to measure these various results and often show these results as a monetary value. This was the main reason behind the metrics so that performance or systems could be measured with regards to certain targets being achieved. These measures were often for various individuals so that they could immediately understand their targets and the organisations goals and therefore these HRM metrics can aid the organisations collective learning.

According to Parise (2007) metrics offer key information to HRPs' who are responsible for KM or related domains consisting of effective distribution and creation of knowledge in organisations.

The HR metrics and scorecards allowed the HRP the ability to value, manage and measure the success of what has or was implemented by the HR department. This shows that by measuring what HRM trends can deliver the HRP can accurately adopt

the correct HRM trend that can and will add value to the organisations strategy. (See proposition 3)

### **6.2.6 Knowledge management**

Since the findings concluded that KM was an absolute precondition for the company to function and grow. The HRP understood that before the HR department could perform any of their core functions, the correct KM systems had to be in place. Most of the organisation's knowledge management happened through these KM systems or intranets. The KM systems were mostly identified as enterprise resource planning (ERP) software or intranets. What this means is that the HRP and the KM manager would need to work or network together to satisfy internal and external needs, such as satisfying customer needs or making internal knowledge available to the organisations personnel, thus increasing the organisations ability to learn collectively.

According to Parise (2007) Organisations that successfully performed SNA and devised and implemented successful interventions gain partnerships among business stakeholders, the KM manager and the HR manager. All three stakeholders could and should be involved so that the drivers or opportunities to network are identified.

The HRP agreed that before the HR department could perform any of their core functions, the correct KM systems had to be in place since the majority of the organisation's internal leanings happened through these systems or software.

Conversely, theory suggests that for the KM system to be effective and add value, the employees must understand and accept the KM system.

Carter and Scarbrough (2001) mention that the result of a best practice is seen by the success of a KM program and realised through gaining the commitment of employees to the KM program. They go on to say that it is particularly important to identify points of knowledge creation and sharing within a company that hold strategic importance.

However, some of these KM systems that were in place within these organisations often added little value to HRM or to the organisation. In some cases they did not function the way they were promised or intended to.

According to Cross, Parker, Prusak and Borgatti (2001) there has been little effort put into systematic ways of working with the KM systems that were embedded within the organization for their social networks.

There was enough evidence to suggest that if the HRP understood how, why and what KM system needed to be adopted or refined by their organisation, then they could therefore increase the organisations collective learning and competitiveness.

See proposition 2.

### 6.2.7 Social networking

A codifying theme that came out of this study showed that social networking was an effective means for the HRP to discover HRM trends. It was evident for the HRP to subscribe and keep certain social and professional networks within or outside the organisation to add value by enhancing collective learning within the organisation or by leveraging social capital from outside the organisation.

According to the Agribusiness HR review 2008 results showed that the trend of employee referral programs and networks ranked at the top of the list to recruit employees.

Storberg-Walker and Gubbins (2007) agree that HRM interventions add value because they either leverage social capital and/or change social networks to align them with organisational goals. The HRP with skill to alignment networks with organisational goals could add to organisational success or strategy.

Another fact that came out of this study was the use of social networking as a means to discover HRM trends internally and externally. The use of internal social networks helped the HRP to share the organisations vision and help the organisations employees understand the company's goals.

Storberg-Walker and Gubbins (2007) further stress the social network perspective suggests that HRD should focus on developing appropriate network structures (e.g., bridging or bonding) and/or appropriate opportunities and conditions for action (to transfer resources). Therefore according to Storberg-Walker and Gubbins (2007) targeting HRD interventions on strategic positions in social networks can quickly increase individual, team, and organisational effectiveness, efficiency, and opportunities.

The HRPs' were well aware of the social networks within his/her organisations. What is crucial for the HRP, according to proven theory, is to harness the value and subscribe to these online (LinkedIn and Facebook) or offline social networks to share knowledge and best practices within their organisations. There is also evidence in this study that suggests that if the HRP keeps or subscribes to these social networks, they will aid him/her in adopting valuable or new HRM trends or practices. This confirms proposition 1 of this research study.

Parise (2007) confirms that it is the informal networks in organisations where much knowledge creation and transfer takes place. Parise's evidence concluded that analysing, keeping or subscribing to social networks, whether online or offline, would in fact aid the HRP with the adoption of new or valuable HRM trends.

Interviewee comment: *"We keep internal social networks with partners and employees"*

### 6.2.8 Collective Learning

Learning and sharing knowledge throughout the organisation was seen as another HRM trend that the HRPs' were trying to implement or manage better. This unveiled that the HRP must try to analyse more information around this topic to ultimately create a collective learning organisation. E-learning (Electronic/online learning) was another common topic of discussion, such as E-learning simultaneously with international offices or benchmarking across the organisation, specifically not just for the HR department but across the organisation.

Parise (2007) indicates that SNA techniques help the HRP understand the relevant connectivity among subgroups and also mentions that creating strong ties between these subgroups facilitates the transfer of complex and key knowledge between these business units.

The findings of table 2 indicate that workplace learning, employee development and training and development represent important functions of HRP. The identification of organisational progress and performance enhancement further confirms the widespread notion that HRM is contributing to the bottom-line and performance of the organisation.

Constituent components	Mean rank	Overall rank	Standard deviation
Workplace learning	3.60	1	3.34
Training and development	4.20	2	2.49
Employee development – training, education	4.30	3	2.75
Organization development	4.80	4	2.39
Performance improvement	5.40	5	3.24
Career development	5.90	6	2.08
Instructional design	6.00	7	2.58
Theories of learning at individual and organizational level	6.20	8	2.78
Consulting	7.20	9	2.97
Formal and informal learning	7.40	10	2.59

Table 2: The continuous comments of HRD. Taken from McGuire and Cseh (2006)

(David McGuire, and Maria Cseh. 2006. The development of the field of HRD: a Delphi study. Journal of European Industrial Training 30, no. 8, (October 10): 653-667.)

Collective learning such as workplace learning within these several organisations leads to continuous improvement and ultimately better results that are more measurable by the HRP or organisation. The fact that all the HR practitioners within this study understood the importance of identifying and implementing the HRM trend of collective learning added to their organisations competitiveness. (Proposition 2)

Ulrich and Allen (2009) stress that HR leaders must identify and measure leading indicators so that they can identify early signs of success or failure and therefore must implement these learning mechanisms that correctly identify and implement what functioned well.

From the findings it is evident that the HRP must investigate why certain HRM trends are effective or ineffective in their organisations and then create changes to ensure improved future performance and learning's for their corporations. Therefore the research recognised that the HRP that can identify the HRM trends that will influence collective learning within his/her corporation will add value to their organisations corporate strategy going forward which is in line with proposition 2 and 3.

As stated by Frank and Taylor (2004) the future emphasis is likely to shift from purely individually oriented learning, toward making teams (often virtual and sometimes global) more effective in working with each other to meet common or company goals.

### **6.2.9 HRM transformation**

It was discovered that by transforming HR practices into your organisation requires recognising emerging HRM trends at each level of HRM and ensuring that each level is consistent with those trends.

Adopting the correct HRM trend by the HRP means transforming all HR practices within their organisation so that they are all aligned to the corporate strategy of their corporation according to Ulrich, Allen, Brockbank, Younger & Nyman (2009).

The findings of this study suggest that it is crucial to transform all the correct HRM policies or departments in line with the wider corporate strategy therefore confirming proposition 3.

Storberg-Walker and Gubbins (2007) notes that if HRM experts want to have effective corporate strategies, then this requires that employees must be in the right position, doing the right things at the right time with the right relationships.

### **6.2.10 Utilising HRM consultants and trainers**

Clearly the HRP has had to handle many new tasks within these transforming organisations such as aligning HR strategy with corporate strategy and continuously scouring the environment to identify new HRM trends, whilst still administrating the HR department, therefore it was a necessity that the HRP utilise consultants and trainers according to the respondent's responses.

Ulrich and Allen (2009) agree that the judicious and targeted use of outside consultants as partners will advance the HR transformation.

The HRP specialist must also play the role of an internal business consultant advising top management on the latest trends and developments within the field and linking HRM to the wider business. Therefore it is important to understand how and why the HRP has had to adopt certain trends within his/her origination so that his/her organisation's collective learning and competitiveness can increase now and in the future. This substantiates proposition 2 in this study.

David McGuire, and Maria Cseh (2006) mention the identification of organisational development and performance improvement further confirms the prevailing notion that HRM as contributing to the bottom-line performance and competitiveness of the organisation (See table 2).

#### 6.2.11 HRM trend adoption

The majority of the respondents agreed that they or their HR departments must discover new HR trends or techniques either via social networks or through reading or subscribing to HR material or illustrations. Finally the respondents often used the internet or an online social networks such as LinkedIn or other such sites as the society of human resource management (SHRM) to discover new trends in HRM field.

The researched confirmed proposition 1 that by keeping social networks the HRP will be aided in adopting new and valuable trends within these ever changing global environments.

Garavan (2007) in his study mentions that a firm must be flexible to respond to changes in the global environment.

#### 6.2.12 Other HRM trends

Up skilling was noted as also being a negative advantage within these organisations instead of just a positive HRM trend to follow, due to the possibility of these candidates high flight risk after their training or studies.

Home offices and flexi time were seen widely as a “need to have” but where mostly yet to be formalised. This also came up within talent management and employee engagement that is the more skilled the individual the more likely he/she would be entitled to these privileges if the industry allowed it.

Almost half of the respondents had some registration or qualification in psychologist.

According to Rainbird (1995) competitive advantage is secured when organisations have skills and capabilities that are unique, difficult to replicate and imitate by competitors.

There was a big trend for the line or other senior managers to have formal HR management training or expertise in these organizations

According to Garavan (2007) the increased assignment of HRM activities to line managers and the decentralized tendency has indicated a changing role for the HRP.

Key trends	Mean rank	Overall rank	Standard deviation
Changes in work patterns and organization forms	2.91	1	1.22
Changing definition of where and how work is accomplished	3.27	2	1.10
Nature of work and how it is organized and structured	3.45	3	2.30
Establishing the value of HRD in organizations	5.09	4	3.27
Changing global workforce	6.09	5	2.74
Changing demographics of workers	6.27	6	2.90
Ethics and professional development	6.45	7	1.92
New notions of career and career development	7.00	8	2.00
Globalization	7.18	9	2.99
E-learning	7.27	10	3.29

Table 3: Key trends influencing the field of HRD. Taken from McGuire and Cseh (2006)

(David McGuire, and Maria Cseh. 2006. The development of the field of HRD: a Delphi study. Journal of European Industrial Training 30, no. 8, (October 10): 653-667.)

According to the findings by McGuire and Cseh (2006) changes in the structure and organisation of work, how and where it is performed and how it fits with the organisational form were identified by respondents in their study (Key trends influencing the field of HRD Taken from McGuire and Cseh 2006) as the most important trends influencing the field of HRD (Table 3). Similarly, changes in the global workplace and the demographics of workers were also identified in their study as factors that will vigorously shape the future of HRM.

### 6.3 Summary of the in-depth interviews

The in-depth interviews can be summarised by what HRPs consider as important now and what they consider as important going forward by identifying, learning, improving or by initiating certain trends. The in-depth interviews exposed that the

organisation will either learn, communicate, share knowledge, manage talent and achieve strategic goals as a whole if the as HRPs can identify and adopt what trends best suit their organisation or industry.

HR directors/managers and practitioners are not only accountable to ensuring the sound HRM governance of organisations through utilising proactive strategies to influence and optimise the people contribution to the bottom line, but also responsible to align HR with the organisations goals and strategy to increase market share and profits.

So HRPs' are transforming their departments and organisations into sort after companies so that talent will be drawn to them.

Social networks, collective learning models and knowledge sharing systems are now being utilised by the HRP so that they can promote internal communication, knowledge sharing, discover talent, talent management and retain talent within the organisation. Some of these systems uncovered entailed flexi time, home offices and individually tailored retention packages.

Finally, the findings clearly outlined the importance of discovering, correctly implementing and adopting innovative HRM trends and techniques at the right time within these industries to ultimately create a more competitively advanced and learning organisation which can validate all 3 of the propositions of the research study.

## 7 Conclusion

### 7.1 Key Findings

The study showed that the speed and flexibility by which HR practitioners are able to adopt HRM trends increases the competitiveness of their organisation.

The study also discovered that collective learning is reliant on the ability of the HRP to adopt and administrate HRM trends relevant to those industries.

The key findings of this study have shown that as new needs arise in different organisations the correct HRM trends must be adopted as soon as possible to confront these new challenges within these industries. Ulrich and Allen (2009) mention that your goal as a HRP is to prioritise which HR practice should receive a disproportionate investment of money, time and talent.

*Interview extract: "Another important way of getting information is through reading research papers... we're also a member of the corporate leadership council which is part of the corporate executive board"*

The research has show that by keeping up to date with social and professional networks, the HRP will be consistent with the discovery and adoption of new and effective HRM trends within their own organisations.

According to the Agribusiness HR review (2008) results showed that the trend of employee referral programs and networks ranked at the top of the list to recruit employees.

Question: "Setting up home offices... do you see anything like that happening?"

Interview extract: *"No, definitely not... I think it depends on what kind of industry, what kind of business. But it's not possible in this industry."*

The ability to analyse and value social capital and the social networks of employees within organisations is fast becoming a prerequisite within the HRM field. The HRP must also have the skill to capitalise on these internal and external channels or networks, so that they can share this knowledge swiftly throughout the company. This will all add value to the organisations competitive advantages and its ability to learn collectively.

## **7.2 Recommendations from findings to stake holders**

From this study I have gained a wealth of knowledge and understanding into the HRM field, where I now feel that the HR department will be one of the keys to an organisations competitive and sustainable advantage. Not only will the HR director

tend to be as important as the chief operation officer (CEO) but in some industries or cases even more so. The HR department will singlehandedly attract, manage and retain talent and this process will be financially measurable. The suggestion here would be to begin setting up these internal systems that can manage and measure talent.

One other recommendation to the HRP would be, since the advances of IT development and the affordability of in-house web development, to rather develop your own online systems to be exactly what you want. So the system adapts to the company and not the company to the system.

It seems recently that global companies are being approached by HR software distributors/developers that convince companies that they need to invest in these HR ERP packages or software which in turn will save the HR departments recruiting costs. These systems seem clever and make sense, due to the fact that the company now has a HR solution that will create talent pools and a critical mass of talent for the company as this software forces recruitment agencies to upload all their candidates' CVs (curriculum vitae) onto the system and it also forces individual candidates to upload their CV to this system. So now these systems can match internal job specs to these uploaded CVs automatically saving the HRP time sifting through hundreds of CVs whilst at the same time building up a pool of various skills for the company in the future.

From this study it was evident that each industry or organisation has to look at and evaluate a variety of solutions before implementing or buying into just any trendy HR ERP solution. My recommendation here would be for companies to see past this short term solution and avoid buying into any of these fixed systems for several reasons; The data base of CVs that these systems are creating become stale. A stale CV is a CV that has not been updated for, roughly, more than six months. There is now a possibility that the candidate has been placed in that time and thirdly the candidate does not want his/her information available on these databases or portals.

Take this typical scenario, the HRP receives a job specification (spec) from one of his/her line managers, HRP uploads the job spec to this system, the system automatically generates supposedly the best CV matches to this job spec. The HRP now contacts the best match first. The chances that this person, is still on the market after six months to a year of being on this system, is very low. So after the HR practitioner has called all of these potential candidates, roughly only three out of ten (30%) of these candidates contact details are still correct or active. This is mainly due to the fact that the recruitment agencies globally will not enter the correct contact information onto these data bases when submitting their own candidates for obvious reasons as well as the candidate's contact details may have changed.

Now the HRP is back to square one where he or she has to send another link or spec to all their preferred suppliers of recruiters and head hunters where the traditional recruitment cycle begins again. All that has happened is the HRP has wasted time and money. The key learning here for the HRP is that when it comes to recruiting

talent it is usually far more economical to outsource this process to a recruitment specialist who has the expertise and personal relationships with these potential and active job seekers.

As our business environments move faster and faster the HRP is going to be competing for more and more talent. Another trend that is surfacing with the experienced job seeker is that these job seekers would rather not submit any information to any of these various job portals or specific companies HR online software because he/she does not want to be bothered by countless recruiters and HR departments for roughly the next eighteen months.

What these talented/skilled job seekers are pursuing more is to be associated with executive professional recruitment agencies to administrate or market them personally. Now there is only one line of contact for the skilled job seeker due to this personal relationship between the agency's recruitment specialist and this job seeker. Professional recruiters already have these individual relationships with skilled job seekers and the only way to get to these talent pools will be through these agencies. The candidate/job seeker may now even instruct the HRP to deal with his/her recruitment agent.

HRM technology is clearly becoming faster, easier, online (live) and cheaper. Another finding from this study was the trend for the organisations to allow the knowledge worker more freedom to work remotely or from wherever they choose, such as flexi time or home offices, which often would be in another country.

Global growth strategies such as an International joint venture strategy are an increasingly important alternative for competitive organisations to consider or pursue when expanding internationally. There is no evident motive for these expansion trends not to continue since pressures from global competition continue and the need to discover quickly the use of treasured limited resources wisely is likely to be with us for some time. Especially after this current 2009 economic downturn organisations must constantly and collectively learn.

It is one thing to enter into an in an International joint venture and quite another challenge to make it succeed. With many reasons for organisations to naturally continue with various global growth strategies, there is a significant internal and often external pressure on the whole company to achieve this growth. Studies have shown that many of the failures indicate that the quality of human resource supervision can be essential for these global growth strategies. Thus it will be vital in some organisations for the HR expert to have the skills to adapt to these cultural challenges and growing pains that these organisations will encounter. Growth and success also come at a cost and often this cost resides solely within the HR department therefore the HRP of these organisations must be ready and equipped for these challenges.

Furthermore, when an international joint venture takes place there are differences in the organisational learning capacity of the partners. The shifts in relative power in a competitive partnership are related to the speed at which the partners can learn from each other. Therefore the HR expert must provide a HRM strategy for the control and

share of such cultural changes in the partnership. The HRP must be aware that by delegating various HRM responsibilities to operating managers, who are concerned with short-term results, would be a sure formula for failure and must take actions to avoid this pitfall according to Schuler, Randall S. (2001).

Lastly, I would like recommend to the various stake holders to refer to figure 3 (Conceptualising Collective Learning Processes in Organisations) to see what quadrant your organisation falls within, in terms of organisational collective learning. I would recommend that all of the stake holders, if they have not already, to begin the process of moving towards quadrant 1 and thus become a learning organisation or the quadrant that best their needs.

### **7.3 Recommendations for future research**

I believe that in the future there will be a huge divide between human resources and their managers. A certain amount of independence or trust will be expected from employees where they will not want to be just an employee but rather independent. Therefore guide lines may be given with targets and time lines to these human resources.

Employees, depending on industry, will choose what hours they work, from which office or even country. This has already been happening across the world, where entrepreneurs based in mineral rich countries actually transact and market their goods from a tent set up in the Congolese jungle. Some entrepreneurs run their entire business remotely from a boat. Cisco employees work at home in different States by using state of the art Cisco technologies. Cisco has already developed the technology of “video presence” whereby you can interact with your colleagues or boss in real time from a different country as if they were sitting across the desk from you.

I would recommend further research into what the impact of home offices and flexi time will have on the knowledge worker of the future.

It is also recommend for future studies, to see what percentage of skilled job seekers or knowledge workers want their information on various/multiple HR databases or job portals.

Finally, I would also recommend further research on the impact of online enterprise human resource planning software on the HRP in the future to see if the HRP’s role may become redundant because of such advances in online HR software.

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## 9 List of Tables

Table 1: Five stage data analysis framework approach was used when analyzing the primary data of this study, developed in Britain according to Pope and Mays (2000). **(Page 23)**

Table 2: The continuous comments of HRD. Taken from McGuire and Cseh (2006) (David McGuire, and Maria Cseh. 2006. The development of the field of HRD: a Delphi study. Journal of European Industrial Training 30, no. 8, (October 10): 653-667.) **(Page 64)**

Table 3: Key trends influencing the field of HRD. Taken from McGuire and Cseh (2006) (David McGuire, and Maria Cseh. 2006. The development of the field of HRD: a Delphi study. Journal of European Industrial Training 30, no. 8, (October 10): 653-667.) **(Page 69)**

## **Appendix 1 - List of industries evaluated**

1. Telecommunications
2. Construction
3. Mining
4. Food and Beverage
5. Pharmaceutical
6. Insurance
7. Military
8. Recruitment

## Appendix 2 - In-depth Interview request form

Dear .....,

RE: Human Resource Management trend dissemination and adoption.

Human Resource Management trend dissemination and adoption is becoming an important aspect of the HR practitioner's strategy within today's corporate environment. Evidence suggests that the organisations that are applying and executing these new trends are becoming competitively more advanced than the organisations that are not.

I am currently a post-graduate student at the Gordon Institute of Business Science (University of Pretoria) doing my Masters in Business Administration (MBA) titled: "Understanding how/why Human Resource Management trends become disseminated to Human Resource Practitioners". I acquired your contact information via Unique Personnel's client database or through your company's reception. As the responsible manager for your organisations HR strategy, I kindly request a short (20 min) but in-depth interview with you whenever you have a few moments free. The interview will aim to determine the strategic use of HR management trend awareness and adoption within your organisation.

It would be highly appreciated if you could contact me with a meeting time before August 25<sup>th</sup> this year 2009 so that I may have sufficient time to statistically analyze the data and complete my dissertation before November this year 2009.

I thank you in advance for your consideration to meet with me for my research study. The results of this study will also be made available to you and your details and information shall remain anonymous within the study.

Yours sincerely

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### Appendix 3 - The interview schedule

The in-depth interviews followed the following structure and basic sequence:

- ⊕ What is your Job Title?
- ⊕ Which of the following best describes the industry sector of your organisation?
- ⊕ Number of year's practical experience in the HR Field?
- ⊕ Professional Registration and Memberships?
- ⊕ International Professional Membership?
- ⊕ By which means do you keep up to date with relevant professional HR knowledge and issues?
- ⊕ What do you read to keep up to date with Professional HR and related matters?
- ⊕ Number of employees working fulltime and part-time in your organisation?
- ⊕ In 2009, do you expect the number of employees in your organisation to increase/decrease?
- ⊕ In 2009, do you expect the number of HR-related employees to increase/decrease?
- ⊕ Is HR directly represented at board level or the highest decision making body of the organisation?
- ⊕ Is the HR strategy aligned with corporate strategy?
- ⊕ Will the HR department grow in importance to the organisation?
- ⊕ Do you feel that your organisation is keeping up to date with current HRM trends?
- ⊕ What would you consider to be current trends in the HRM field?

- ⊕ Are you aware of these more current trends such as (to be advised due to the rate of change due to the IT industry)
- ⊖ Do you apply a specific competency model to develop your HR personnel if so what are they?
- ⊕ Do you have a succession plan in the HR department?
- ⊖ Which methods do you use to formally develop the HR departments' employees?
- ⊕ What is your biggest HR challenge and opportunity for the year ahead?
- ⊖ Does your organisation prioritise or execute the following tasks and to what degree, please elaborate?
  - Innovation of HRM practices
  - Managing work life balance / wellbeing
  - Managing talent
  - Improving performance management
  - Reward systems
  - Transforming HR into a strategic partner
  - Restructuring the organisation
  - Retrenching employees
  - Managing change
  - Corporate social responsibility (CSR)
  - HR metrics/Scorecards
  - Managing diversity and employment equity
  - Skills development
  - Mentoring programs

- Use of other professionally controlled assessment tools
- Leadership and management development
- e-learning
- Social networks
- Health & wellness programs
- Utilize external training providers
- Utilize business schools
- Develop HR scorecards
- Team building
- Corporate governance
- Line management cooperation (best practices)
- Internal communication
- Management innovation and innovation reward systems
- Knowledge management
- Online HR and remote management
- Retention strategies
- Keeping up with new HR trends
- (International) HRM benchmarking
- Creating a high performance culture
- Flexi time
- Home offices
- Mobile/remote enterprise resource planning ERP

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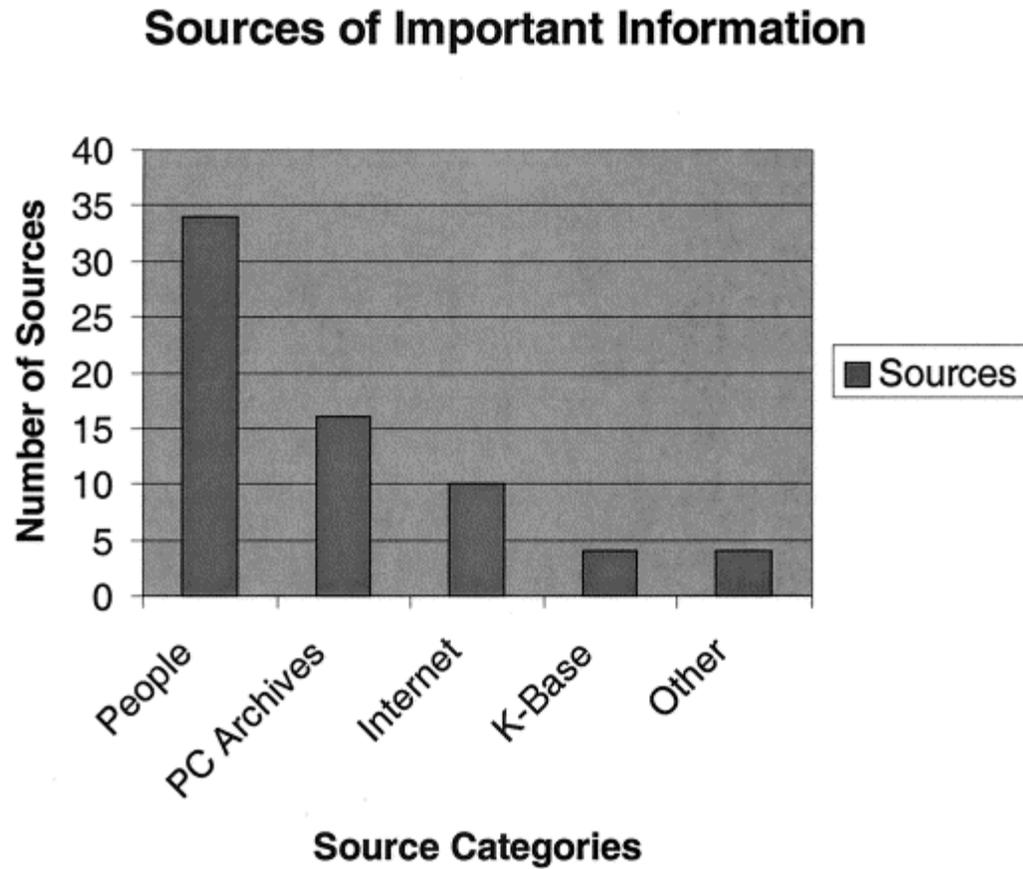
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**Figure 1: Where People Go For Information**



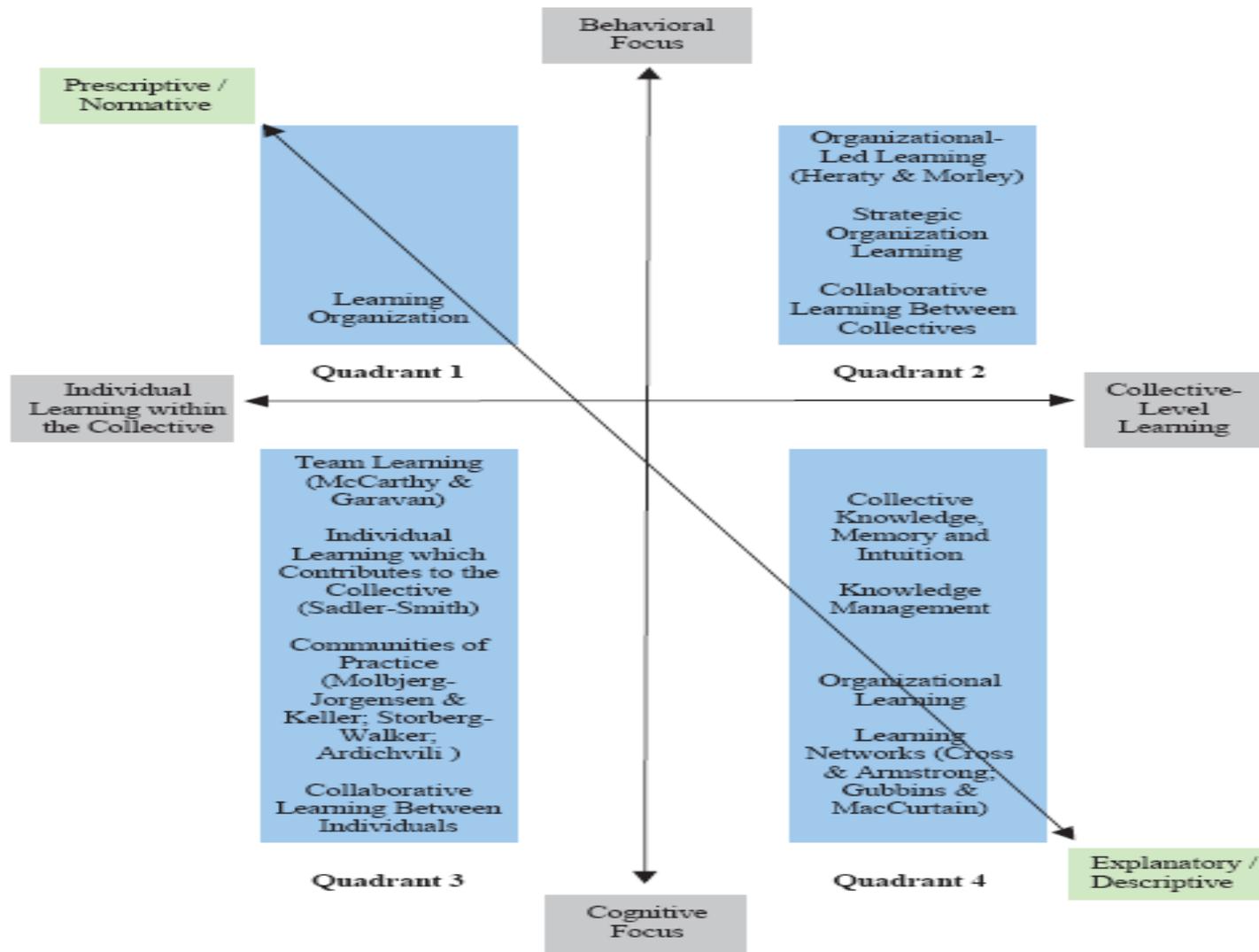
Where People Go For Information. (Cross, R. Parker, A. Prusak, L. Borgatti, S. (2001).

**Figure 2: Analytical concepts and assumptions of exchange theories**

Concept	Assumptions
<b>Exchange actors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• individuals or corporate groups such as a company</li> <li>• can be particular people, for example a named friend</li> <li>• can be an interchangeable holder of a structural position, for example, the chief knowledge officer of a company</li> </ul>
<b>Exchange resources</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the currency of exchange</li> <li>• may be tangible or intangible</li> <li>• may be perceived as gifts</li> <li>• when given to another the exchange resource is known as a <i>cost</i></li> <li>• when received, or produced as a result, the exchange resource is known as an <i>outcome</i></li> </ul>
<b>Exchange structures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• dependent relationships that support the exchange</li> </ul>
<b>Exchange processes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• interactions required to conduct an exchange</li> <li>• comprise exchange opportunities followed up by exchange transactions (negotiated or reciprocal)</li> <li>• may lead to an exchange relation when there is a series of exchanges between parties</li> </ul>

(Detail derived from Molm & Hall, 2001, pp. 260-262.)

**Figure 3: Conceptualising Collective Learning Processes in Organisations**



Garavan, McCarthy (2008). COLLECTIVE LEARNING PROCESSES