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Trends Reshaping the Future of HR

Reconfiguring the Global Talent Landscape

By Yaarit Silverstone, Claire Yang, Colin Sloman, and Susan Cantrell

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As companies continue to globalize—and as talent becomes harder to find locally—companies will increasingly be composed of a global, highly diverse workforce. To thrive in this new environment, HR will need to reinvent itself to remain relevant and help their organizations navigate a complex and changing global labor market.

2 | Accenture Strategy |

The Trend: The Globalization Mandate Continues to Pick Up Speed

Increasingly, companies are operating in a highly global, complex environment that is experiencing unprecedented change. Although companies have been marching to the beat of globalization for over twenty years, the globalization mandate continues to be at the top of many c-suite executives' strategic agendas.[1] Three main drivers are fueling current globalization efforts:

• **The Global Customer Imperative:** For many organizations, the growing population and economies in countries like China, India, and Brazil represent a new market opportunity and tremendous potential for growth. Some are now even finding new and fertile ground in other emerging markets as well in places like Turkey, Pakistan, Mexico, Egypt, and Vietnam—often enabled by new digital channels that make it far easier to reach customers around the world. Between 1990 and 2010, the number of companies operating across borders almost tripled, from 35,000 to almost 104,000.[2] In particular, the proportion of those expanding globally from emerging markets has soared in the last two decades, going from 12 percent to 30 percent.[3]

• **The Global Talent Imperative:** In the last decade, it has become increasingly common for organizations to establish operations like call centers in countries where labor costs aren't as high. Recently, however, more organizations are turning to other countries for labor to find scare skills and to source the best available talent—wherever that talent may reside. In part, companies are driven to do so due to the shortage of talent in local markets. In many industries, the supply of talent is no longer where it used to be, and companies must now look globally across all labor pools (e.g., new hires, contingent workers, outsourcing, or partnerships) to fill their talent needs.[4]

• **Digital Advances:** Recent advances in technology now enable people all over the world to work together on a scale never seen before. Cloud computing, new social and collaboration tools, and advances in remote access enable many jobs, such as call centers and software development, to be easily carried out remotely. The digitization of work has also lowered the cost of global communications and business computing, and has led to shared business standards throughout much of the world.

As more organizations push to globalize, they face a far more complex global landscape than they've ever encountered before. For one, old assumptions no longer hold true. For example, multinationals from Asian markets once competed primarily on cost. A recent study by Accenture and the Economist Intelligence Unit, reveals that more of these companies are reducing their reliance on low-cost operations and are now striving for competitive advantage based on innovation, employee skills, and intellectual property.[5] In addition, as more multinationals emerge from every corner of the globe with rapid speed, companies face sometimes unpredictable—and far fiercer—competition. Companies also face significant challenges related to navigating a complex and ever-changing sea of local regulatory environments as well as changing local talent markets and customer needs and preferences.
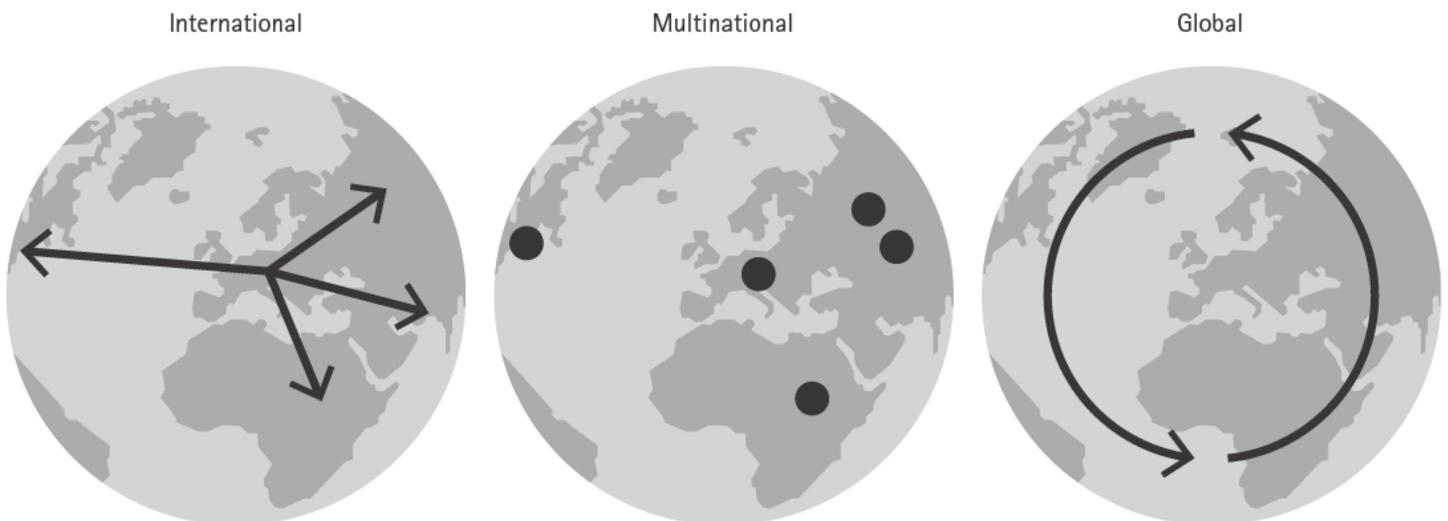
Impact on the Business

As companies continue to seek new customers and workers all over the world, they face a very different landscape: one in which the global talent map loses its borders. Instead of organizing the production of goods and services market by market in a traditional multinational approach, businesses are now adopting more fluid organizational forms where the production of goods and services easily flows globally to places where the greatest benefit can be created at the most efficient cost—despite country borders. Although fraught with challenge, the rewards for operating in such an environment can be great. Companies can improve their ability to manage risk, reduce operating costs,

achieve market growth, flexibly respond to changing market conditions, and acquire highly skilled talent like they've never been able to before.

To achieve these benefits, businesses will need to transform themselves. They will need to realign their workforce and leadership with their new global footprint, ensuring that leaders and managers have a global mindset, can operate across cultures, and come from a variety of backgrounds that are reflective of the organization's multi-cultural customer and employee base. To meet its goal of increasing sales from overseas operations to more than 65 percent of revenues, for example, Takeda Pharmaceutical Company, one of Japan's oldest and largest drug companies, has put a priority on hiring non-Japanese staff and management with international experience. Active in about 70 countries, its offices are run largely by non-home-country executives, and its top leadership represents America, Germany, and France.[6]

Indeed, no longer will globalization be equated with merely replicating the operating model from a home country everywhere else, or establishing separate operations in a variety of countries (see figure 1 below: Evolutionary Stages of Globalization). Instead, organizations will need to be globally integrated, and take a much more nuanced approach to globalization by carefully balancing the need for consistency and unity across the organization with a healthy respect for and appreciation of difference and local needs. And they will need to learn how to operate in global virtual teams composed of people with high degrees of cultural knowledge, global awareness, and cross-cultural teaming and collaboration skills.

Figure 1: Evolutionary Stages of Globalization

| International | Multinational | Global |

Impact on HR

HR will play a critical role in helping their businesses achieve this transformation. But to do so, HR will need to:

• Create a new mission and mandate beyond standardization and toward a "glocal," customized approach;

• Innovate in five key talent management practices:
  1. use of analytics to become expert advisors on the global talent map
  2. global talent acquisition
  3. global talent mobility
  4. global leadership development
  5. global virtual teams

• Create new HR organizational models and roles

Create a new mission and mandate beyond standardization and toward a "glocal," customized approach

As companies marched to the beat of globalization and implemented large enterprise systems in the last decade, most galvanized their efforts and technology resources toward standardizing their people practices. In fact, "going global"

has often been equated with the process of standardization and the creation of a one-size-fits all, uniform work experience. The goal, of course, was to achieve a global view of an organization's people and operate consistently as a unified organization rather than as a series of fragmented parts based on geography or business unit Standardized and repeatable HR processes and systems helped companies quickly enter new markets by enabling a standard "plug and play" approach to geographic expansion.

But today some of those very same reasons for standardization (e.g., an increasingly globalized and diverse workforce) now demand a new and very different mission and mandate. The great challenge over the next decades will be nothing less than to find ways to capitalize on the growing complexity and diversity of the global workforce, while leveraging a common platform of information systems and a standardized framework to make employment practices relevant to every employee in a more granular, locally relevant and customized way.

Today's successful companies carefully balance the need for global, efficient solutions with the need to be locally responsive and relevant in a "glocal" approach to talent management. When value is driven by consistency and standardized operations (HR transactions, for example, or training that provides a functional workforce with common skills), a company needs global policies, services and technology platforms. But when value is driven by the needs and variations

of specific markets (sourcing talent, for example, or crafting an alluring employee value proposition)—a company needs to be intensely local in its focus.

Companies can achieve this by adopting a customized people management strategy that does not seek to treat a workforce as a single monolithic entity, but rather each individual as a "workforce of one."[7] Using a workforce of one approach, organizations can still accommodate local needs, but in ways that still use standards that can be defined centrally. Variation exists, but only in a highly coordinated, controlled, and scalable manner—and only when there are good, strategic business reasons for how variation can maximize employee performance. Workforce of one approaches to local customization can include: segmenting a workforce and creating a variety of tailored but standardized people practices for different workforce segments; creating a pre-defined menu of standard, modular choices from which employees can choose; creating a single standard rule so broad and simple that it can flexibly be interpreted in a variety of ways; or enabling employees to create their own customized people practices using standard technologies or processes. (See: Trends Reshaping the Future of HR: Managing Your People as a Workforce of One).

Innovate in five key talent management practices

Although operating as a global entity will touch every HR practice, HR will need to pay particular attention to developing new and innovative practices in five key areas:

1. Use of analytics to become expert advisors on the global talent map. Just as the finance function advises the business on important decisions like how to allocate financial resources to different parts of the business, so too will the HR function need to take on the critical role of advising the business regarding how to allocate human resources to different parts of the business. HR will need to help the business decide who will perform which tasks and in which places. In addition to using advanced analytics and scenario simulations to anticipate internal skill needs, HR will also need to analyze data to understand key variables in different geographic regions to determine how to best fill these needs. They will need to develop an overall workforce plan, advising the business

on where to "make" talent (e.g., train people), where to "buy" talent (e.g. hire talent with the desired skills on the open talent market), where to "move" talent (e.g., by developing stronger internal mobility programs for employees) and where to "borrow" talent (e.g., hire contingent labor, or partner with another company like an outsourcing provider to obtain the skills needed). Variables to be analyzed for each region could include:

- number, quality, and types of skills available

- government labor and employment regulations

- costs of labor

- labor mobility policies, typical turnover rates and relative "hotness" of various talent markets

- cultural norms and values

- educational systems and the skills that they produce

- healthcare systems and benefits

- the employment value proposition that might attract and retain people

- the strength of the employer brand in particular regions and countries

After conducting an analysis of where to source talent across the global talent map for various roles, one executive at a global professional services firm explained the results of his own company's analysis, "In certain European countries, we discovered that the social protection legislation means that HR needs to account for employees not just as human capital, but also as liabilities. In these locations, we thus focused on how to retrain or redeploy talent. But in places like India, with rapid turnover and a shortage of talent for key positions, we decided to focus on crafting a highly attractive employment value proposition designed to attract and retain talent."

2. Global talent acquisition.
Acquiring talent in unfamiliar geographic locations—whether due to global expansion or the need to find the right skills wherever they might reside—can be challenging. Degrees may mean different things in different countries. And even if a person has the right degree, he might not be the best hire. Many companies have found that university graduates from developing countries often struggle with language skills and cultural fit and different

educational backgrounds. Perhaps for this reason, many multinationals choose to put people from their home country in foreign countries when they expand; only about half of Asian multinational companies surveyed are undertaking initiatives to attract foreign talent.[8]

When companies have tried to hire locally, they have traditionally relied on local employment agencies. But a variety of innovations on the horizon offer other options that promise to make global talent sourcing more effective and less expensive. In the future, for example, global talent agents may work on workers' behalf to represent people to companies, much as talent agents do for actors today. Alternatively, people may represent themselves digitally in public global databases filled with a rich set of data. Data could include skills assessments, for example, that can help companies better evaluate educational backgrounds and determine a global standard of education.

Already, online workplace Elance offers skills assessments, and new start-ups are offering robust skills assessments in specific areas like business. Other data could include: assessments of cultural fit or competencies; indications of where a person would be willing to work and the type of company or work a person desires; samples of a candidate's actual work; training transcripts; detailed project work experience; work motivators; work competition results; and expertise as analyzed through one's social media or other online contributions. Explains Matt Schuyler, Chief Human Resources Officer,

Hilton Worldwide, "The wave of the future will be for substantially more information to be available to companies on individuals to help them find the right skills and fit for the job."

Inno360, for example, is an internet startup that promises to help companies identify global talent pools of innovators custom tailored to a particular problem at hand in minutes by mining the "deep web" of references to individuals and the types of work they have performed as listed in patents, scientific journals, articles, books, technical documents, and more. Indeed, new models of matching talent to task all over the world are emerging, such as global crowdsourcing. Kaggle, for example, is a global community of scientists from over 100 countries that can answer problems posed by companies to win cash prizes.

To acquire global talent, companies may also work to forge strong relationships with potential talent in micro communities specific to a geographic location and type of work. Explains Ryan Cook, Global Talent Acquisition Operations Manager at CH2M HILL, "The future of corporate recruiters will be micro-community builders, marketers, and campaigners." Using data-based analytics to determine the Internet behaviors and habits of particular types of skill profiles of people who reside

in different geographic locations, recruiters can discover where, when and how different kinds of people spend time online. Armed with these insights, recruiters can build microcommunities targeted to each profile and determine the best sources of influence. For example, they may find that many technologists in Estonia like to peruse antique cars on eBay or read particular types of books. Accordingly, they could encourage existing employees to start a discussion on Amazon about such books, or create a talent community around a popular blog or site on the topic. The resulting relationships with like-minded people could later be mined for recruiting purposes.

In the future, we also anticipate that companies themselves will contribute to a collective global database so that potential employees can easily see what skills are in demand and in which geographic locations—further helping attract people to where they are needed most across borders. In addition, companies may begin to create their own global talent pools. Some companies are even setting up open access training programs to ensure that more people have the skills they need in specific regions. Once trained, the first right of employment would be with the company that trained them.

3. Global talent mobility. Critical to operating as a globally integrated company will be the ability to move talent around the world, both to develop global mindsets and understanding among employees, and to ensure that the best people from the global talent pool can be deployed against

the best business opportunities. This can be challenging, however—due to compensation structures that vary dramatically by region, employment legislation and work visa rules and restrictions, and HR practices and policies that may vary significantly by geography. Only 34 percent of employees surveyed in a recent Accenture survey report that it is easy to move to another job within their company where their skills would best be utilized.[9]

Leading companies are developing a variety of internal global mobility programs to overcome these challenges. For one, no longer are companies relying solely on expensive expatriate packages designed only for high potential future leaders. They are now offering a variety of mobility options for employees at all levels in an organization, including long term options, short term options, business travel, rotational programs, and permanent transfer. Some are also designating one segment of their workforce to be globally mobile. At one global bank, for example, 450 of the company's top-performing employees joined an internally mobile, fully flexible workforce where they may be assigned to work anywhere in the world in any capacity on short term notice. The group is run as its own internal department with its own HR function and separate compensation, rewards, and career path structures.

Companies are also developing processes, information systems, and policies to make global movement for all employees easier. For example, whereas until just recently, most employees were required to obtain a new employee ID once they move to another country, many human capital management systems now offer a single global employment ID that can be used no matter what country the employee is currently working in. Global competencies and job descriptions also help facilitate movement. Some companies are even creating international employment packages for a select group of employees with standard pay and benefits that apply no matter where that person currently works.

The vision, explains Jackie Scanlan, Vice President, HR International and Strategy at Campbell Soup, is to "move to a 'pull' talent model. Employees will flow to the work and areas where their skills and experience can lend the greatest value regardless of their title, level or location."

To help facilitate this, organizations will need to develop robust internal talent markets that match talent with opportunity. At Hilton Worldwide, for example, every employee's skills, including languages, education, property experience, local market connections and affiliations with boards and non-profits is documented. Skills documentation has enabled the business to quickly find and deploy employees who have talents needed to achieve specific objectives. For instance, someone who speaks the Cantonese Chinese dialect can help the company penetrate new markets in greater China.

In addition, many companies are experimenting with innovative approaches to encourage global mobility through providing employees a great deal of choice and opportunity. For example, the U.S. Navy experimented with a democratic, market-based system to avoid what sailors call slamming—where personnel specialists send sailors wherever needed with organizationally defined pay, regardless of whether they want to go to that location. The navy developed an online job-auction site where employees can bid on hard-to-fill jobs in undesirable locations; whoever offers the lowest salary and meets the qualifications gets the job.[10] And when Moneypenny, a U.K. answering phone company, decided to provide round-the-clock service, the company gave employees the opportunity to temporarily move to New Zealand, where they could answer calls during the day to provide service during the UK night. (New Zealand is 12 hours ahead of U.K. time). While in New Zealand, employees work four days on and four days off so they can take in the sights while living abroad, a pattern which is set to continue in four to six month stints whenthe next group take over.[11]

Many companies are now trying to help young people gain global experience very early in their careers—no longer reserving global assignments for experienced people or for people being groomed for leadership positions. One executive at a global retailer explains her vision: "I think the traditional mindset of geographical location will change radically as the young generation now expects to see the world. Increasingly, you're going to see a workforce that's eager to take on some of the costs and expense for global opportunities themselves. In the past, we've always thought about expats as being at the top of the house. In the future, however, global assignments will transcend all levels—not only because it's a business requirement but because it's a talent requirement in order for us to attract and retain the best talent."

4. Global leadership development.
In order to achieve the benefits of a globally integrated enterprise, HR organizations will need to develop the capability of helping the business grow strong local leaders with a global mindset who can quickly adapt to or lead a business in any context across the world—whether that be Tanzanian non-profit organization, for example, or a global multi-national operating with global business standards. At South Korean consumer goods company Samsung, for example, new hires for all management levels are hired internationally to reflect the company's diverse operations. New hires spend two years in Korea before managing overseas operations, often in their home countries.[12]

Once local leaders are firmly in place, companies should ensure that decisions can be made locally and that innovation can occur at a local level. No longer does leadership reside centrally in just the top executives in a company; for complex global enterprises, leadership must reside in all levels of the workforce and local managers as well. This helps the company remain flexible, agile, and responsive to unique customer tastes and preferences in specific markets. The goal is to instill "borderless leadership"—or enabling leadership authority everywhere it's needed across the globe.

HR organizations will play a critical role in helping local leaders develop the capabilities they need, such as managing a multi-cultural workforce, managing virtual teams across multiple time zones, adopting a global mindset, responding to local business dynamics, and embracing diverse ways of thinking. They should also learn how to see and anticipate meaningful shifts in the patterns and and rhythms of the dynamic global economy. Explains Kevin Kelly, CEO of executive search firm Heidrick & Struggles," We're seeing that leaders based in India, China, Russia, or the Middle East want to know how they stack up competency and skill-wise with their counterparts in leading Fortune 500 companies based in the West. So they're turning to us to benchmark their skill set with competitors. They are hungry to ensure they have the top talent and the right leadership teams to compete on a global basis."

To develop such leadership capabilities, organizations can make sure potential leaders have a range of international developmental assignments and first-hand exposure to foreign markets, access to international development programs, s and plenty of coaching and mentoring. Shell, for example, used relatively short-term assignments for employees in its HR organization as a way to meet the needs of different geographies while also developing critically important skills and mindsets in the workforce.[13] And Korean conglomerate LG Electronics used expatriate Korean managers to serve as mentors to help local Indian management teams build their skills.[14]

An Accenture survey reveals just how rare such approaches are. Only 47 percent of the Asian companies surveyed use mentoring and coaching to develop their leaders, and less than 20 percent use international assignments to build a global mindset in their leaders.[15]

5. Global virtual teams. As companies continue to grow a more global workforce, employees will have to learn how to work in global, highly diverse virtual teams. These teams will likely not only be composed of people from other cultures and geographies, but they may likely be composed of workers other than employees in a complex ecosystem of temporary

workers, contractors, outsourced service providers, workers on loan from strategic partners and more who come together in projects to create value for an organization.

To support this, HR will need to operate in a context that promotes and emphasizes global sensitivity and awareness on the part of employees, as well as coaching on how to work in virtual teams that communicate across time zones and distances. HR may provide training, for example, on how to identify and overcome one's unconscious bias formed by one's distinct cultural upbringing. Establishing common ways of communicating and collaborating across the organization, regardless of location, will be important, as will shared cultural attributes and values that provide a sense of cohesion and belonging that span diverse markets.

Fortis Healthcare, for one, is making efforts to create a common "language" that reflects its corporate culture. The Indian healthcare company, which operates across nine countries in the Asia-Pacific region, is striving to develop unique, unified ways of working across locations. "Language plays a part," says executive director Balinder Singh Dhillon. "Not the spoken language, but the commonality of terms and understanding and values. This includes the softer side of things, such as how you address a patient."[16]

Another executive at a global resources company explains, "As we continue to seek highly skilled talent all over the world we will need to work on making sure our entire workforce is sensitive to inter-cultural understandings and global teaming."

Create new HR operating models and roles.

HR may also need to adopt new operating models, modify existing ones, or create new HR roles to more effectively support the global enterprise.

Take the experience of one multinational, for example, that created an organizational structure in which its major brands were managed by regional teams around the world. The company was hindered by HR processes and policies that were organized by geography. If a brand manager for Asia, who's based in Singapore, wants to hire someone in the Phillipines, the manager

confronts hiring practices and laws local to the Phillipines which he is unlikely to understand.

On the other hand, many global organizations today are facing challenges with the centralized model of the center of excellence as well. Because the center of excellence (the group of experts responsible for designing functional HR and talent management practices) is centralized and removed from the varied demands of the business in various geographies, it is prone to produce standard, one-size-fits all solutions that don't always adapt well to local geographic, regulatory, or cultural conditions. Organizations can get around this problem by having the center of excellence design talent systems that are more flexible and that use standards-based customization approaches to create tailored practices based on the needs of different geographies.[17]

Other alternatives may be needed, however. Some have suggested a bifurcated center of excellence. One could be oriented toward designing those practices that need to be tailored for faster moving, more volatile markets like those in high-growth emerging markets, and another oriented toward designing practices that need to be tailored for more stable western markets.

Another solution might be to create talent segment representatives responsible for deeply understanding the needs of various talent segments—some of which might be based on geographic regions whose people share similar needs and preferences. Other talent segment representatives, for example, might represent those with mission-critical skills who need to be geographically mobile across the organization. Whereas today's HR business partners are aligned to business units and charged with developing business unit specific talent strategies and adapting talent practices to the business unit, only sometimes are business units organized by geography. And even if they are, multiple geographically-organized business units may have employees who share similar needs and preferences, and can be served by a talent segment representative who deeply understands their needs.

Segment representatives could design talent practices for these segments themselves, or in conjunction with professionals in the center of excellence. They might also be responsible for using analytics to deeply understand their talent segment to help the business make decisions regarding where to source which type of talent. The capability of using analytics to become expert advisors on global talent may reside in this role, or in new roles specifically devoted to this purpose. (For a list of new roles that might be created to develop an analytics capability, see: Trends Reshaping the Future of HR: Talent Management Meets the Science of Human Behavior).

Another new operating model that can help with globalization is the establishment of a global integrated business services group, or a central group that performs transactional back-office processes across functions—such as HR, IT, supply chain, finance, and procurement—in an integrated fashion. If someone has to travel to India for a few weeks, for example, an integrated business services group could allow them to have one point of contact to handle everything—such as travel arrangements, visas, health visits for immunizations, IT and security practices, and more. Devoted to serving employee needs in a single point of contact, such groups can make global mobility far easier.

Bottom Line

As companies strive to achieve their strategic objectives by both growing in new geographic markets and by acquiring skills wherever they may reside throughout the world, globalization issues will continue to be at the top of most c-suite executives' strategic agendas. To help their organizations better operate in a complex, interdependent, and globally connected world, the human resources function should develop a new mission, set of capabilities, and potentially even a new operating model if it wants to remain relevant. With the need for a globally diverse and highly mobile talent base on the top of most organizations' list of global objectives, HR will be critical in helping their organizations achieve their globalization mandate.

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About Our Research

The primary objective of this large-scale research initiative is to develop insights that can be useful to both HR and business executives as they seek to maximize the role of HR as a critical function within the organization. We are exploring how current business trends might reshape the nature of the function—in terms of HR's mission and mandate, the key activities HR performs, the skill set necessary for HR professionals, the metrics on which to evaluate HR's performance, and the organizational and governance models and roles that will most effectively help HR maximize its value to the business. We also are examining current best practices in HR, as well as some of the obstacles HR is facing and how those obstacles can be overcome in the future.

Notes

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10 All information on the U.S. Navy in these two paragraphs is from George Cahlink, "Fewer Hands on Deck," *Government Executive*, June 1, 2004, 68. Reprinted with permission from *Government Executive*, June 1, 2004. Copyright 2009 by National Journal Group, Inc. All rights reserved.

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