

impact that these pitfalls might educe. How are layoffs impacting the welfare of the victims and their families? What are the effects of plant closings on the communities in which they are located? Are any societal changes occurring as a result of the changing nature of the labor market?

Cooper (1999), for example, decries the effects of corporate restructurings and contingent work on the quality of life in the United Kingdom. He states that the price being paid by employees is high and has adversely impacted their relationships with children and spouses and has negatively affected their health and productivity at work. Cooper also cites research findings to illustrate that there are huge differences between senior-level management and other employees in their perceptions of the consequences of these changes.

These differences in perceptions should not be surprising. Osterman acknowledges in his book that those highly skilled, mobile winners in the new labor market are more individualistic. Prosperity allows more independence, and, consequently, prosperous individuals and societies historically (e.g., Greece and Rome) tend to move toward the more individualistic end of the spectrum and away from the collectivist end. As is the case with natural disasters, people are much less likely to join in a collective effort to improve the welfare of all until and unless they are confronted with conditions that compel such behavior.

Osterman's recommendations for ameliorating the effects of the new labor market require collective effort. Given the foregoing discussion, however, his attempt to spur employees, communities, and government officials into proactive action might have been well served by including more information answering questions (similar to those above) about societal and economic effects of the new labor market. The absence of this information was disappointing. Perhaps we can expect to see such compelling evidence in an upcoming book by Osterman. Its publication would be eagerly awaited.

However, no one work can be so comprehensive as to address every aspect of any given phenomenon. Osterman's concern and unease about current conditions are admirable, as is his effort to bring them to public attention. The information presented is well documented and well balanced, and the arguments of the book

are insightful and intelligent. *Securing Prosperity* has much to offer to academicians, policy makers, and the community at large. Readers identifying with its concerns can only hope it is a starting point for addressing the current ills of the new labor market.

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***Strategic Human Resource Management***, edited by Randall S. Schuler and Susan E. Jackson. Oxford: Blackwell, 1999.

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The field of strategic human resource management (SHRM) has grown extensively in the last 15 years, as reflected by the contributions in this book. If there is any duo that has become synonymous with this field, it is Susan Jackson and Randall Schuler, the editors of this volume. This duo could have just as easily assembled their own work into a book on this subject and of this size. Nonetheless, because administrative science is a "socially constructed truth" (Astley, 1985), Schuler and Jackson have assembled "the work of authors throughout the world" (p. xviii) who have contributed to the development of the SHRM discipline. In doing so, they have provided an extensive coverage of—and wide-ranging perspectives on—this emerging field.

In a brief preface the editors highlight the two-phased transformation of the discipline: from personnel management to HRM, and from HRM to SHRM. The main theme running through the book appears to be the idea that the management of people in organizations as "strategic assets" critically drives the formulation and implementation of value-enhancing strategies and

the achievement of (sustained) competitive advantage.

The book is organized into five parts. Part I consists of six chapters in which several authors describe the dynamic nature of the organization-environment relationship, review the various theoretical perspectives for understanding/researching SHRM issues, discuss a typology for linking HRM issues to corporate growth expectations and organizational readiness, analyze the extent to which HRM systems foster dynamic capabilities and engender sustained competitive advantage, and examine SHRM issues within the traditional strategy content-process debate. Taken together, the chapters in this part provide the foundation for the challenges in the SHRM field that academics and practitioners face.

In Part II, also consisting of six chapters, authors take a closer look at how people are linked with the firm and address the strategic implications of the different approaches to the people-organization fit. Specifically, they analyze the extent to which firms manage their human resources to enable effective implementation of competitive strategy, develop and leverage distinctive competencies, and achieve effective tradeoffs between strategic "fit" and "flexibility."

In Part III the authors closely examine the external context of firms and the implications of managing human resources to address the needs of a firm's stakeholders. In four chapters authors analyze the extent to which HRM is the source of shareholder value, address the competing pressures of the firm's constituencies, and examine how HRM enhances customer service and satisfaction through employee service fairness. Also, the nature of the employment contract is examined in the context of the changing workplace in the United States.

In Part IV (four chapters) the contributors address "global dimensions" of SHRM. Specifically, several authors examine SHRM issues in the context of multinational companies' headquarters-subsidiary relationships; international strategic alliances and joint ventures; multinational/global strategies reflecting integration-responsiveness tradeoffs; and regional trading blocks, such as the European union.

Finally, in Part V (four chapters) the authors address various issues concerning the role of the HR department and HR professionals in an increasingly complex and turbulent world. Spe-

cifically, authors address the question of whether the HR function (and department) is in crisis in light of contemporary realities of organizations, as well as the role of the HR function in fostering strategic business partnerships within and between organizations and networks of organizations. The book concludes with a prescription for how HR policies and procedures contribute to the firm's bottom line.

Although the book represents a collection of solid work that establishes SHRM as a legitimate discipline for research and managerial practice, I was somewhat disappointed that it did not really break new ground. It would have been helpful if the editors had devoted an introductory chapter to identifying the key themes reflecting progress within the SHRM field. Also, a concluding chapter, providing a critical, innovative appraisal of the field and the issues more likely to engage researchers and practitioners in this area within the next decade or so, would have provided guidance beyond the contributions in Part V of the book.

I believe that the development in the SHRM field can be understood in terms of at least three overlapping research streams: (1) SHRM within the traditional SWOT framework of strategic management, (2) SHRM within the resource-based view of the firm, and (3) SHRM in the context of the "relational view" of the firm (Dyer & Singh, 1998). The third research stream emphasizes the development and deployment of people-embodied knowledge assets as crucial to the attainment of strategic goals through interfirm partnerships. Also, the emphasis on managing human resources as "strategic assets" (the main theme of the book) must be counterbalanced by alternative perspectives that show how HRM systems can inhibit the development of organizational competencies (Lado & Wilson, 1994) and frustrate the achievement of sustainable competitive advantage (Coff, 1997). Furthermore, inasmuch as those in the field of strategic management should beware of becoming increasingly "ideological" (Shrivastava, 1986), SHRM researchers and practitioners should be sensitive to the field's ideological underpinnings (e.g., Guest, 1987; Legge, 1995).

Also, I believe the editors could have done a better job of reflecting the book's "international" scope. Unfortunately, the book might convey (or reinforce) the perception of SHRM as being parochial, reflecting an Anglo-American mind-

set (twenty-six of the forty authors are affiliated with institutions and companies in the United States, and at least seven other authors are resident in the United Kingdom). Work on strategic management of human resources in developing countries (e.g., Kanungo, 1995), in the so-called planned economies in transition (e.g., Peng & Heath, 1996; Sharma, 1993), and in Japan and other more "developed" Asian economies (e.g., Nonaka, 1988) represents a curious omission from this book. Finally, the editors could have provided their rationale for the choice of the chapters/readings. Without a clear rationale, some readers might (wrongly or rightly) conclude that the choice of chapters was rather ad hoc, especially since there are many other works of scholars in the field that equally compete for attention.

Nevertheless, I feel that Schuler and Jackson have done a masterful job of assembling readings and chapters that reflect the current state of knowledge in the field of SHRM. This book could easily be adopted as a set of readings for an MBA-level course in SHRM. It contains a useful blend of theoretical and practitioner-related chapters, reflecting the importance of balancing rigor and relevance both in researching and teaching SHRM topics. The book's international flavor also makes it easily adaptable as an instructional resource in institutions in various parts of the world.

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