

## Canadian to head global HR association

*Quebec's HR association president takes the reigns of the World Federation of Personnel Management Associations*

BY UYEN VU

**SOMETIMES**, the solutions are the same all over. Despite vast differences in income levels, market conditions, labour regimes and social infrastructure, managing people follows a few common rules.

That's how Florent Francoeur, president of Quebec's HR Association, L'Ordre des conseillers en ressources humaines et en relations industrielles agréés du Québec, sees it as he steps into a two-year term as president of the World Federation of Personnel Management Associations (WFPMA).

Founded in 1976, the federation brings together five continental federations that represent 70 national HR associations with the mandate of developing and improving the effectiveness of professional people management around the world.

Francoeur said one of the federation's main objectives is to help HR associations in one region tap into the expertise developed in another. Part of that work involves sharing research and articles, developing and building on networks of contacts and undertaking large-scale research projects.

"Particularly, with countries that don't really have a human resources profession, we hope to help them build a profession," said Francoeur.

### **CHRP a model of success**

High on a list of priorities for Francoeur is to help countries that don't have an HR certification model develop one.

"By the end of my mandate, I would hope that any country that doesn't yet have one would have been made aware of the importance of having one," said Fran-

coeur.

Canada's experience in setting up the Certified Human Resources Professional (CHRP) designation is viewed as a model of success, he said, in that it won endorsement from 10 jurisdictions with distinct characteristics.

One project under way is helping Mexico set up an HR certification model. Given the existence of the Professional in Human Resources (PHR) and Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR) designations in the United States, as well as Canada's own CHRP, the HR profession in Mexico feels a competitive pressure to develop one as well, he said.

### **Bridging differences in HR**

Asked about bridging the differences in HR all over globe, Francoeur's response was optimistic. Even with countries that have a less developed

professional infrastructure or that are still trying to develop professional people management, "we have as much to learn from them as they do from us."

He pointed to the AIDS crisis in Africa, which is striking down adults in their productive years. In southern Africa, adults aged 20 to 49 account for about 60 per cent of all AIDS deaths. The result is a shortage of workers, particularly in the middle-aged cohort. Francoeur compares this to the looming wave of baby boomer retirement facing North America.

"The result of both these problems is we're soon (to) be facing a shortage of personnel. So what do we do to manage that? We share the information we have, the articles, the research papers around skills shortage and the solutions," he said. "It's a question of transferring knowledge from one generation to another. It's a question of

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how to motivate employees. These are global problems.”

## Employee motivation universal

When it comes to people management concepts such as employee motivation, Francoeur said certain core principles transcend differences in cultures, management styles and labour laws.

“If we talk about employee motivation, for example, it’s universal that if you have a manager spend a few minutes now and then to praise you for the work that you do, you’re more motivated. That’s true across the world,” said Francoeur. “The four or five major principles are these large principles (and they) apply as much for a Montreal manager as a manager elsewhere.”

Issues facing HR practitioners around the world are certainly diverse, but not dissimilar. At a 2002 conference held in Mexico, federation members heard Mexican president Vicente Fox talk about setting HR

## ■ FRANCOEUR’S RESUMÉ

### A leader who challenges the status quo

Francoeur, a mathematician by training who obtained the CHRP designation without having worked in HR, has been at the Quebec HR association since 1993. He’s an entrepreneur at heart, always seeking to be out in front of an idea, said Geneviève Fortier, past-president of the Canadian Council of Human Resources Associations. Fortier worked with Francoeur at the Quebec association when she was president between 2000 and 2004.

Though humble in demeanour, Francoeur is the type who keeps challenging the status quo, said Fortier. When the association wanted to set up a designation for human resources professionals, the *conseiller en ressources humaines agréé* (CHRA), the only designation available was one for industrial relations professions, the *conseiller en relations industrielles agréé* (CRIA). In Quebec, professional bodies and designations are regulated by the province, and it was resistant to the idea of setting up a second professional designation.

“This took years to get and Florent never gave up. He kept working with the Office des professions, he gave them as much information as they needed,” said Fortier. His efforts spoke to the belief that “we need to do what’s right for the profession. Sometimes it involves long, hard-won battles, but if it’s something we have to do, let’s do it.”

Francoeur tends to be politically astute as well, added Fortier. Around the CCHRA table, it’s Francoeur whom others turn to when political face-off is at play. He seems to be able to quickly assess where someone is coming from and what outcome the person is seeking.

Despite his lack of practical HR experience, Fortier has no doubt of his commitment to the profession. A number of times other associations tried to lure him away, but he stayed put.

“He feels this profession is a solid profession, one that needs to gain more recognition than it has currently. And he’s prepared to do whatever required to get the business community to recognize it as such.”

Francoeur currently sits on the board of the Labour Standards Commission as well as the Labour Market Partners Commission, part of Quebec’s Department of Labour and Social Solidarity.

guidelines for the public service he hoped would be held as a model for the rest of the country. The guidelines were aimed at establishing professional people management, including open and systematic recruitment and selection and the

elimination of a favour-swapping culture.

Then participants heard General Electric’s former chairman and CEO Jack Welch speak on the transparency entailed in the forced ranking performance management system. This

system works only because the company had an open, honest and consistent appraisal system, he said.

Hence, it’s about transparent people management — just at different scales and at different stages of adoption.