

SUMMIT 2009 - A Year of Challenge, Risk, Reward

Although SUMMIT 2009 convened in the wake of a serious recession, whose effects are still being widely felt by many Americans, about 800 human resources professionals arrived at SUMMIT with optimistic attitudes and were rewarded with concrete solutions and hope for the future.

The opening session speaker for this year's SUMMIT, Gary Heil, emphasized to the crowd that all organizational change begins with leaders' personal change. He asked, "How willing are we to change our calendars to effect change?"

The challenge, he said, is to (1) engage others to (2) take responsibility for (3) creating a better future.

Heil encouraged participants to continue engaging in purposeful dialogue toward creating the "right environment." Citing The Disney Company as an example, he related the finding that "we litter because we see litter." Disney strives to maintain a clean environment to perpetuate guests' non-littering behavior. Carrying the analogy to the HR realm, Heil said, "If you create the right environment, already motivated people will come." He closed by quoting Arnold Palmer, enjoining the audience to "Tell them they can play." That is, call employees to action, because ordinary people can do extraordinary things.

A panel discussion rounded out the morning's presentations following a lively break in the Exhibit Hall. Participating on the panel, which focused on enterprise risk management, were Katie Lawler, Michele Coleman Mayes, David Oser, and moderator Anne Cohn Donnelly. These industry leaders reinforced the idea that human resources has a clear role to play in risk management efforts.

The discussion touched on issues at the top of attendees' minds on this day, including the risks inherent in managing an organization's finances and in preserving privacy in this era of burgeoning social media forums. Good, fact-based decision making and mitigation are keys to recovery when risks result in a negative outcome. In that effort, organizations are cautioned to not limit HR's involvement to tactical or process-oriented matters.

The panel indicated that the HR professional should be confident in the skills and experience he or she brings to the effort. Human resources leaders can promote their role in risk management by:

- understanding the business as a whole,

- being visible to other leaders in the organization,
- looking for allies within the company (those who “get it”), and
- taking ownership of enterprise risk management.

SUMMIT 2009 - Cappelli, Cain Present Talent in Different Frameworks

Following a lunch break that featured rock ‘n’ roll inspiration at the Young HR Leaders Luncheon and insights from Peter Cappelli at the CHRP Luncheon, the HRMAC Awards of Excellence were announced. The Volunteer of the Year award recipient was Ronald Sipiora, and the Leader of the Year award recipient was Joseph Golbus.

Audience response technology was used to engage the crowd in a lightning-round survey regarding talent management issues, which lead into keynote speaker Cappelli’s presentation.

Defining talent management as “anticipating needs and having some plan to get them met,” Cappelli spoke to the need to appropriately leverage the unique skills and mind-sets of employees now joining the workforce ranks. For example, citing a survey of recent MBAs, he indicated that high brand value (read: Google) tends to dictate where they want to work. Similarly, in another survey, when offered the option of an immediate bonus versus a salary increase over a period of time, respondents said they would prefer to receive the money now. Cappelli’s main point was that the hiring models of old no longer apply, and employers must understand the new drivers of employee motivation and talent.

Cappelli advised the following steps to manage the costs of uncertainty in assessing talent:

- Avoid mismatch costs; that is, balance “make” (promote from within) and “buy” (recruit from outside).
- Reduce risk with shorter forecasts and portfolio approaches.
- Design development to ensure a payback on talent investment.
- Balance employee interests in career moves.

Herman Cain, SUMMIT 2009’s final speaker, took the stage and declared, “There’s a mission just for you. Just look inside, and you will find what you *can* do.” He delighted attendees with a play on the word “can”:

Can-do people make things happen. Then there are the people who are hiding in the can, and the people who focus on the can't who are sitting on the can.

Cain then asked the audience, “How do we get the most out of the people who are sitting on the can?” The answer lies in the question, “Who’s the CEO of Self if you’re not?” Cain insists the effort starts with leaders. Once you become your own CEO of Self, you can help your employees become CEO of Self as well.

Cain listed the following three responsibilities of the CEO of Self:

- Remove barriers that obstruct self-motivation and prevent people from maximizing their productivity.
- Obtain the right result by making sure you’re working on the right problem.
- Inspire self-motivation and passion.

The initialism “ROI” is no accident; in this case, it stands for “return on inspiration.”

Cain related that the first CEO of Self he knew was his dad, a dirt farmer who knew this occupation was not his dream. Leaving the farm, his father worked three jobs, eventually becoming full-time chauffeur and personal valet to the CEO of Coca-Cola. His dad, in turn, helped Cain fulfill dream after dream, and he likened his experience to that of the employer-employee relationship: “Get employees to reflect on their own dreams by being an inspired, passionate CEO of Self. Ask your people, ‘What is your dream?’ They don’t have to share it, but challenge them to recognize the barriers to that dream.”

Cain concluded the fulfilling day at SUMMIT 2009 by reminding participants of a sober yet compelling aspect of the human condition: “We all die. Life is just a minute. You must suffer if you lose it, account for it if you abuse it.”