

SHRM's 250,000th Member Represents HR's Future

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) has recorded its 250,000th member, providing the occasion to look back and reminisce about the 60-year journey that began with a small number of personnel administrators in Cleveland in November 1948. And that's what many in the SHRM family are doing this fall of 2008, culminating with the publication of a book detailing the Society's growth through the decades.

But as Shakespeare once declared, "The past is prologue." Or as a more modern cultural icon, rock band Bachman Turner Overdrive, put it: "You ain't seen nothing yet."

Now that it's more than a quarter-million members strong, SHRM is not only looking back but is also focusing on the future of the Society, of HR professionals and of the HR profession in the United States and around the world.

"Serving as a career partner to over 250,000 members is a substantial milestone," said Laurence (Lon) O'Neil, President and CEO of SHRM. "With a quarter million members, SHRM has greater influence to affect business trends and workplace legislation in Washington, D.C. and state legislatures. Working with HR professionals in thousands of organizations around the world, SHRM and its members are meeting the challenges of a changing world by providing needed leadership to businesses and communities during these historic political and economic times."

The Society's 250,000th member, Kristin M. Sampson of Rochester, N.Y., personifies the future of the profession.

With an impressive background in finance and a longstanding interest in human resources, Sampson, 47, is the kind of cutting-edge HR professional who has embraced both disciplines while riding the rocket of globalization. As director of global HR services for consulting firm Providium, a division of Gallagher Benefit Services Inc., in Rochester, Sampson is a player in the global mobility game—the increasingly vital HR space where talent is developed and moved around the world to help organizations reach and maintain their goals.

'A Great Combination'

"I really enjoy working with people, and I really enjoy analyzing data," said Sampson. "It's a great combination."

Sampson has more than 20 years of experience in international business and finance and an extensive knowledge of global compensation and benefits, policies, competitive practices, strategic planning and tax compliance, which she applies to the task of providing competitive and cost-effective solutions for international assignments. Before joining Providium in 2007, Sampson was responsible for developing and managing Bausch & Lomb's international relocation and global mobility program and for providing hands-on service to senior management, global human resources and employees around the world.

She has been a speaker at professional conferences and local colleges on global issues, including competitive practices, cost effectiveness and compliance issues. As an instructor at the International Human Resources Conference in London, she trained global HR executives in effective mobility solutions.

So it seemed like a natural move to join SHRM. In fact, she had attended a SHRM Global Conference and Exposition, plus some local SHRM chapter meetings, and had been thinking about joining the Society for a few

months, she notes. But with a full-time job, plus volunteer work involving sports, a nursing home and teen ministries as well as church and musical presentations, joining SHRM stayed on that to-do list for a while.

As her luck would have it, she wound up being member No. 250,000. When the call was made to tell her of her honor, she was away from the office. A SHRM staffer made a second call not long thereafter—to assure her that the first one was “not a joke,” Sampson recalls.

Sampson’s response: “I just think this is great. It’s really exciting. SHRM is such a great organization. I’m proud to be a part of it. ... It’s great to be involved with an organization that has both global and local affiliations.”

She also has decided to join the Genesee Valley Chapter of SHRM in Rochester, N.Y., at which she spoke recently on global mobility, and she will be a presenter at the 2009 SHRM Global Conference and Exposition in Toronto.

Despite starting out in finance, “HR was always something I aspired to,” says Sampson. “One of the best things about the profession is getting out and getting to know other people. SHRM helps with that. There are a lot of benefits in belonging to an organization like this.

“Staying up to date about what’s going on in global mobility is one such benefit,” said Sampson, “as is talking with people who do the same thing you do. I’ve had nothing but good experiences with the programs I’ve attended.”

‘In Step with the Profession’

It’s been just four years since SHRM reached the 200,000-member mark. In June 2004, then-SHRM President and CEO Susan R. Meisinger, SPHR, introduced Feliciano Mendoza, director of the Department of Human Resource Management in the Jefferson Parish government in Louisiana, during the SHRM Annual Conference and Exposition in San Diego.

The soon-to-be-released book *A History of Human Resources: SHRM’s 60-Year Journey* (SHRM, 2008) tracks the modest beginnings of the Society, which was called the American Society of Personnel Administrators (ASPA) when it formed in 1948. Its initial growth was anything but steady.

Five years into its existence, ASPA still had only 230 members. The organization did not hit the 4,000-member level until 1967 and did not top the 50,000-member mark until 1992, after being renamed SHRM. In 1998 it reached 100,000 members.

A decade later and two and one-half times as large, SHRM continues to be the dominant force in the profession, with offices in China and India, an initiative to firm up standards for HR education, highly attended conferences, and a vital role in helping to shape public policy on crucial issues such as employment verification and family and medical leave.

Sampson says she looks forward to growing along with SHRM. “You’re always learning.”

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