

PREFACE TO VOLUME ONE

When asked what sociology is, sociologist Alex Inkeles responded pragmatically, “*Sociology is what sociologists are doing.*”¹ This aptly applies to the domain of global HR—“*Global HR is what global HR practitioners are doing.*” As a global HR academic expert, I live partially in the ivory tower of evidence-based knowledge created by my distinguished academic colleagues who focus their research on international and global HR topics. Yet, through my global HR professional work, I cross over into the applied world of my colleagues who practice global HR for organizations around the globe.

The *Global HR Practitioner Handbook* will be released in several volumes. Its main purpose is to promote the dissemination of the body of knowledge of global HR as it is practiced around the world—especially by people and organizations that are ahead of the industry standard. It is intended as a primer for both academics (university faculty and students) as well as HR practitioners who want to learn more about the body of knowledge of global HR through the shared experience of some of its leading practitioners. It supplements rather than replaces the many fine academic textbooks available by focusing on the real-world experience and tacit knowledge of global HR practitioners. The *Global HR Practitioner Handbook* brings together a wide variety of topics that practitioners must be cognizant of when dealing with the many global HR issues they confront in their daily work, both from a strategic and tactical perspective.

The *Global HR Practitioner Handbook* is published in modular format and is available in soft and hard copy. It is organized into three levels of depth: basic, specialized and advanced. This allows the reader to follow a customized learning path based on personal expertise. Basic modules provide an opportunity to understand a particular HR topic from a global perspective. Specialized modules treat a topic specific to a region or country. Advanced modules deal with a global HR topic at a more complex level and in greater depth.

Each module is addressed from the same vantage point and answers the following questions:

- Why is this global HR topic important to successful global organizations?
- What are the major issues related to this topic?
- What are current leading practices?
- What is the role of global HR and what competencies are needed to effectively address these issues?

¹ Alex Inkeles, *What is Sociology?: An introduction to the discipline and the profession* (Prentice-Hall, 1964).

These modules are part of a learning system containing additional learning tools for each module. These tools include learning objectives, guided reading questions for further reflection, terminology and acronyms. Some modules also have accompanying ‘*Global HR in Action*’ instructional vignettes with suggested reading for further evidence-based learning (for a complete list of instructional vignettes, see: www.willamette.edu/agsm/global_HR).

The global HR practitioners who contributed to this project shared their knowledge and experience to advance the profession of global HR. They have done so without financial remuneration so that the *Global HR Practitioner Handbook* can achieve the greatest worldwide distribution possible at the lowest cost to the community of interested people. In line with this vision, each module is available in soft copy download at a minimal charge. A customized set of modules is also available, for a modest production and shipping fee, in hard copy through print-on-demand. These soft and hard copy formats allow the flexibility to continually update existing modules based on developments in the field of global HR, as well as the ability to add new modules on other pertinent topics.

The publication of the *Global HR Practitioner Handbook* would not have been possible without the help of many people. All work was done on a volunteer basis and no institutional funds, grants or other forms of sponsorship were used for its publication. I am grateful to the many global HR practitioners from around the world who responded to my invitation to prepare a manuscript and generously contributed their time and tacit knowledge of global HR. It has been a privilege for me to know them as colleagues for many years and work with them on this project. They not only contributed to this publication, but throughout the years have enriched my own academic experience and that of my MBA students at the Monterey Institute of International Studies and Willamette University. Several people contributed to the practical implementation of the *Global HR Practitioner Handbook*: Robin Hector Vota (English language editor), Jason Petz (graphic designer), Radu Bobirnac (graduate assistant) and the Willamette MBA students who beta-tested the materials in my global HR course during the fall 2012 semester. I gratefully acknowledge the contributions of each and every one.

Lisbeth Claus, Editor-in-Chief

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