

Red carpet rolled out for top HR professionals

HR Summit Awards honour best in profession

BY SARAH DOBSON

IN EARLY 2010, Heidi Flynn was faced with a considerable HR challenge. Her employer of more than four years, software development company TV Works Canada in London, Ont., was being shut down. While the Philadelphia-based parent company Comcast was providing an outplacement service, it would not be available until the company closed. So, faced with no funding, Flynn took several initiatives to help workers before the closure.

"If 127 people had hit the end date and just had to flounder and find their own way, I would have carried that for a really long time," she said. "I'd gone through downsizing and mass layoffs but not the official close of a company where 'This is it.' It's not something I would wish on anybody."

Flynn held roundtable discussions to hear workers' con-



Heidi Flynn
Senior manager
Accucaps Industries

cerns and brought in a career coach, an image consultant and financial institutions who held one-on-one appointments or gave presentations. She also invited companies to come on-site and recruit and, for two months, more than 30 employers, such as RIM and Canada Trust, came in every day of the week, supplying lunch, holding presentations and recruiting.

"It just snowballed into this

massive program and took a life of its own but it was very, very helpful for everybody," said Flynn.

A Google job board was also set up and, to date, about 83 people have found jobs through the program. Flynn herself is now senior HR manager at Accucaps Industries in Strathroy, Ont.

As thanks, the employees threw Flynn a thank-you party, complete with gifts. But, more recently, she was recognized for her efforts with the HR Challenge Award at the 2011 Human Resources Summit Awards in Toronto in February. The awards, presented by *Canadian HR Reporter* and the Human Resources Professionals Association (HRPA), are designed to honour the top HR professionals across the country.

"I was thrilled to be recognized by the award but I'm humbled by it as well because I

See Page 7 / RECEIVING



Receiving awards ‘an honour,’ ‘humbling’ experience

Continued from Page 1

really, truly was doing it just to make sure they were going to be OK,” said Flynn.

Carswell Rising Star Award

Also a winner was Melissa Gare, an HR business partner at Lanxess in Sarnia, Ont., who was presented with the Carswell HR Rising Star Award. For three years, Gare has been a human resources information systems (HRIS) specialist at the 500-employee specialty chemicals company. It’s been a challenge, she said, as the head of office in Germany wanted to align all the legal entities in all the countries on one HRIS platform.

But Gare was keen to have more of a pure HR role, so she also became a labour relations co-ordinator.

“That was wonderful because I got to get more involved in the union aspect,” she said.

Gare is being groomed to become the labour relations manager when the current person retires. She has also moved into more of a generalist function and helped with recruitment.

“I filled over 26 full-time, permanent as well as co-op positions within the final three months of 2010, so that’s keep-



Reid Lewis, vice-president of HR at ConAgra Foods Canada, received the Rogers Communication Innovation in Total Rewards Award.
ing me very busy.”

Gare is also pursuing a professional master in industrial relations at Queen’s University in Kingston, Ont., and teaches

organizational behaviour at Lambton College in Sarnia, where she earned an HR management certificate. She is also president of the Sarnia and District chapter of the HRPA.

“There are some nights I’d like to get more sleep but I love everything I’m doing so it’s really easy,” she said.

As for the award, she said she was shocked and surprised, considering the calibre of the nominees.

“I’m completely honoured because we all do a lot of work and this award says I’m on the right path.”

Overall Talent Management Award

Honoured with the Overall Talent Management Award was Michelle Manglal-Lan, who worked for eight years at Siemens Canada in Burlington, Ont., as manager of strategic talent programs.

When she arrived, the company didn’t really align the development of employees to the business strategy, so Manglal-Lan built a corporate university, the Siemens Academy of Business Excellence.

“Creating the corporate university gave me an opportunity to house that as an umbrella, to start integrating some of the de-

Canadian HR Reporter (Toronto, ON)				Order/Commande
				118934
Date 28.02.2011	Circ. 5145	Page 1	3 / 3	

velopment of our employees to the business.”

And Manglal-Lan is a big fan of her profession.

“I absolutely love the whole people aspect of it, the multi-generational workforce, that employees learn in different ways, the fact technology is constantly changing and it makes some of our areas in HR a lot simpler,” she said. “And I love that it’s ever-changing.”

Rogers Communication Innovation in Total Rewards Award

Another winner at the awards was Reid Lewis, vice-president of HR at ConAgra Foods in Mississauga, Ont. He was given the Rogers Communication Innovation in Total Rewards Award in recognition of the culture of appreciation he helped develop at the food company.

As a relatively small organization — 332 employees — with a large parent company in the United States, ConAgra encourages innovation and risk to grow the organization, he said. To reward that kind of behaviour, the company established a recognition program. But it saw limited participation and low return on investment, said Lewis.

The program was, therefore,

redesigned with help from a vendor so it is now web-based, in real time, and tied to business initiatives and operating principles. The results were impressive — usage of the program increased 350 per cent, engagement scores rose 20 per cent and turnover decreased to 3.7 per cent, he said.

“That has afforded us the opportunity to triple our spend on learning and development in two years,” said Lewis.

Other winners at the HR Summit Awards included Ruth Brothers, a senior HR executive based in Toronto — Toronto Star HR Professional of the Year Award; Trillium Health Centre in Toronto — Workopolis Innovation in Employment Branding Award; Home Depot Canada — Corporate Social Responsibility Award; Chris Bart, a professor at the DeGroot School of Business at McMaster University in Hamilton — TD Insurance Meloche Monnex Corporate Governance & Strategic Leadership Award; Andrew Templer, professor of management at the University of Windsor in Windsor, Ont. — Right Management HR Academic of the Year Award; and St. Michael’s Hospital in Toronto — Grand & Toy Employer Champion of IEP Award.