

Greenhalgh steps down as HRPAs CEO

Leader was driving force behind Ontario's self-regulation, competency framework model

BY MARCEL VANDER WIER

BILL GREENHALGH'S time of transforming Ontario's Human Resources Professionals Association (HRPA) has come to an end. He resigned as CEO of the 24,000-member association last month.

Effective Oct. 1, longtime HRPAs vice-president of finance and information technology, Gary Monk, has assumed the role of interim CEO, with a formal search for a permanent replacement expected to follow.

"There comes a time for everything," said Greenhalgh, 70. "I've been with the association coming up to 12 years and I'd never intended to stay that long. Seven years after I thought I would leave, it's time to leave."

As CEO, Greenhalgh led the HRPAs through the integration of the association's 28 chapters.

The HRPAs also achieved regulatory status in Ontario in 2013 with passage of the Registered Human Resources Professionals Act.

"We're the only HR association in the world with a legislative act that appoints us as a regulator," he said. "That in itself is something significant, because it changed our philosophy as an association in terms of what we do and our priorities."

One result of the legislation was an overhaul of HRPAs competency

framework, from one designation to three — Certified Human Resources Professional (CHRP), the Certified Human Resources Leader (CHRL) and Certified Human Resources Executive (CHRE).

Changes in the profession made the move necessary, as HR was no longer a transactional-type activity, said Greenhalgh. In the past, HR was restricted to organizational backrooms, but over the last quarter-century, the profession has become intertwined in all levels of the organization — including boardroom strategy.

"We created a competency framework that recognizes that," he said. "It's a complete underpinning structure of HR."

While the framework didn't immediately catch on across the country, HRPAs model puts the association in line with many other countries, said Greenhalgh.

"We're not the outlier. I think, ultimately, there will be some kind of recognition (in Canada). It's so fundamental to understand that the profession has changed dramatically in the last 20 years... You can't just have one single designation."

The only province to offer a three-tier designation, HRPAs cancelled its membership with the former Canadian Council of Human Resources Associations — now Chartered

Professionals in Human Resources (CPHR) Canada — in 2014.

Taking charge

Fascinated with HR, Greenhalgh became CEO of HRPAs in 2006, having held leadership positions at Nortel, the *Globe and Mail*, Cinram and Shred-It.

"I always thought that HR got the bum's rush in the professions, basically," he said. "It was the most important (role) and the least understood."

The HRPAs grew exponentially during Greenhalgh's tenure, from 10,000 members in 2006 to more than 24,000 today, said Phil Wilson, chair of the HRPAs board of directors from 2013 to 2016.

"When Bill came in, there was a lot of work (needed) to make the association profitable," he said. "The key is Bill managed the HRPAs as if it were a business. The business grew tremendously during his tenure and the money was reinvested back (into the association)."

The HRPAs was seeking a business leader who understood HR but didn't necessarily have that background, said Wilson.

"Through a number of mandates, he really provided the vision for HRPAs and, more importantly, how to move the human resources profession forward," he said. "Bill has

positioned the HR profession in Ontario on a global basis."

Greenhalgh surrounded himself with an excellent team, but also had a clear vision of elevating HR professionals to a regulated profession through a "very clear and strong competency model," said Wilson.

Looking ahead

The next wave of changes to the profession will ultimately require the guidance of another leader, said Greenhalgh.

The intelligence revolution means automation, machine learning and technology will drive further change in Ontario workplaces, and human resources will need to adjust.

"The reality going forward is that pretty much any job that's being done will have some level of automation applied to it," he said.

"The question for HR becomes: How do they integrate this level of automation? What skills do computers have that people don't? And what skills do people have that are better than computers? And how do you then create an integrated environment where you maximize the capabilities of both?"

"I think that's the challenge," said Greenhalgh. "The importance of HR is going to dramatically change in the next five to 10 years."