#52 The evolution of the objects of the HRPA and predecessor organizations

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Posted on LinkedIn December 1, 2017

There are many that would say that the mission and mandate of HRPA and its predecessor organizations were always to provide member services and enhance members’ careers. But is that the case? If we look at the actual objects of the HRPA and predecessor organizations we find something different¹. There are two important observations: (1) serving the public interest was there and central from the very start, and (2) with each successive iteration there was an incremental step up in the degree to which the Association would manage the conduct of its members. From this perspective, the latest

¹ Those who are interested in having a look at the complete text of the objects of HRPA and predecessor organizations are referred to Objects of the HRPA and predecessor organizations published on the HRPA website.
iteration in HRPA’s objects as set out in the Registered Human Resources Professionals Act, 2013, appears to be much more evolution than revolution.

We need to recall that objects are concise statements of the ultimate purpose of a corporation. Objects are the true mission of a corporation. The diagram below gives the HRPA corporate family tree. At each important juncture, the organization was required to state its objects.

The objects of HRPA and its predecessor organizations were always mainly about the contribution that the Human Resources profession could make to society.

Formally, it all goes back to the incorporation of the Personnel Association of Toronto PAT in 1954. The purposes and objects of the Personnel Association of Toronto at the time were simply: “to further sound personnel practices and to encourage constructive employer-employee relations.” These objects (or object in this case) were clearly outward-looking rather than inward-looking. This basic orientation
remained throughout successive iterations. It is not that the objects were entirely outward-looking. For instance, in 1973, the objects of the PAT were amended to include: “to promote social intercourse and good fellowship among its members.”

Nonetheless, the key observation is that making a contribution to society is the common theme that runs through the objects of the organizations in HRPA’s family tree. This is important because this service orientation is a core aspect of professionalism. The drive to professionalize stems from this service orientation which was there from the very start.

The objects of HRPA and its predecessor organizations evidence a clear direction in their evolution—with each iteration getting more focused and serious about self-regulation

Although the words regulate, regulation, regulatory, or regulator, wouldn’t be used at HRPA in reference to the mission and mandate of the organization until 2008, it is clear that this was the direction things had been moving in from the start.

In 1973, the object of the PAT was “to further sound personnel practices and to encourage constructive employer-employee relations.” In 1979, to the objects of the PAT was added: “to improve [members’] competence in the field of personnel and industrial relations.” By 1979, we have in the objects of the Personnel Association of Ontario (PAO) the following: “To establish and encourage the acceptance and maintenance of uniform province-wide standards of knowledge, experience and ethics for all persons engaged in the field of Personnel Management.” In 1990, when the Human Resources Professionals Association of Ontario Act, 1990, was passed, “to maintain discipline among members of the Association” was added to the objects of the Association. Finally, in 2013, with the passage of the Registered Human Resources Professionals Act, 2013, the regulatory mission and mandate is fully formed with “to promote and protect the public interest by governing and regulating the practice of members of the Association and firms in accordance with this Act and the by-laws.”

With hindsight, we can see ‘proto-regulation’ in the objects of HRPA’s predecessor organizations. With each iteration, the regulatory mission and mandate become stronger and more focused. Seen in this light, the present objects of the HRPA represent the logical end-point of an evolution started in the 1970’s. This is not to say that the latest iteration did not represent a significant bump-up in the mission and mandate of the organization, it did, but it can be seen that this was more a matter of evolution than revolution.

From the very start, HRPA and its predecessor organizations always had to serve the greater good as a core aspect of their mission and mandate. This kind of historical perspective is very useful in understanding HRPA’s current mission and mandate.