

Book Review:
Creating Value out of People
Author: Choo, Ho Geok

Choo, H. G., (2005). *Creating Value out of People*, Singapore: Singapore Human Resources Institute.

REVIEWED BY: SHAUN RIDLEY

At first glance, Madam Ho Geok Choo has assembled an eclectic group of articles on work-related issues facing the business and government sector in Singapore. However, closer examination suggests that *Creating value out of people* provides a much more valuable contribution to the thinking and knowledge of the management of human capital, which may have wider application to other countries in the region, including Australia. A number of themes emerge from the articles around the broad topics of: ' becoming an employer of choice' , ' managing diversity' , ' coping in times of change' , ' the true role of HR' , and ' Singapore in an international marketplace' .

Scarcity of skills and human capital are common complaints in the developed world and Singapore represents a microcosm of the challenges facing organisations. How to attract good people to your organisation, how to retain the talent you want to keep and how to encourage older workers to remain at work and share their skills and knowledge with others, are all crucial questions explored by Madam Ho at both a philosophical and practical level. Some of the remedies lie at government policy level whilst others are in the direct control of the manager in every Singaporean organisation. Most experienced managers will have heard of the issues and the approaches raised by the author. However, the practice of implementing these approaches is less common and this makes the reminders in this collection of articles as relevant as ever before.

Singapore's openness to foreign workers makes it more adept at managing diversity than many other countries. Madam Ho points out, however, that there is still much work to do to equip organisations to cope with other forms of diversity such as, family friendly workplaces, older workers, Generation Y workers, and ex-offenders. Such issues could be transplanted directly into an Australian context with many organisations in this country struggling to develop managers with the understanding and skills to genuinely manage diversity in a way that respects the individual and provides benefits to the organisation.

The author challenges her readers to reflect on the true role of the Human Resources professional in organisations facing significant change. The notion that HR professionals should move away from the tactical record keeping role to a more strategic, ' whole of organisation' role is not new. But Madam Ho does take an interesting slant on the issue by suggesting that HR professionals are the culture leaders of organisations and they can refocus the organisation onto their human capital rather than purely concentrating on the financial performance. This is a strong and important reminder to us all. Ignoring our human capital is possible in the short term, but it could lead to longer term barriers to creating a culture of success that is sustainable.

Madam Ho's clear and readable style makes this an enjoyable book to explore. It provides both a refreshing reminder and occasional provocation that we can and should do more to enhance the value of our human capital. In addition, the messages are relevant to most organisations in most countries which have shortages of the real talent needed to make businesses prosper.

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