

HRO on Display in the Big Apple

Even without all the controversy, HRO World New York still draws hundreds to the New York Hilton for the industry's biggest gathering where buyers learn, kick tires, and sign multi-million-dollar contracts.

By HRO Today Staff

When HRO World was launched by the founders of Outsourcing Today in 2003, the outsourcing market was still an immature place in which buyers and providers fumbled their way into long-term deals that sometimes unraveled, other times resulted in strategic benefits, and in just about all instances produced angst for both parties.

Four years later, the heady exuberance that once marked the early days of the market has been replaced by a tempered embrace of HRO as buyers and providers adjust to an evolution that has taken place since four years ago. This was a theme often echoed at this year's HRO World New York on April 17 and 18—an event that drew some 1,400 attendees and 120 exhibitors to the New York Hilton for the industry's biggest annual gathering.

It was clear early on during the conference that HRO has evolved beyond the model that first developed at the turn of the decade. HRO Association President Sharon

Taylor in her keynote address made the point clear in her presentation, entitled “HRO, Where Do We Go From Here.” Reflecting the fact that the market has now matured for both buyers and providers, Taylor, SVP of corporate HR for Prudential Financial, discussed the most pressing issues and challenges facing the industry. At a time when most new deals have changed from the early lift-and-shift model to one that is transformational in nature, Taylor's keynote was a timely comment on the state of the HRO industry and reflects the need for all market participants to reassess their goals and the most effective paths for reaching them.

Much like the industry, HRO World has evolved in recent years as well. Once a controversial gathering that drew the ire of organized labor, the two-day meeting these days has worn away its divisive image as HRO gains broader acceptance at home. This year's conference content also reflected a change in market focus with buyers and providers emphasizing issues beyond the rudimentary ones such as cost savings and implementation. Instead, discussions are more cen-



Christian Baader of SAP (I.), this year's HROA Person of the Year, with EquaTerra's Glenn Davidson, last year's winner. (Photos courtesy of the HROA.)

Richard Crespin, executive management of the HRO Association, announces this year's award winners.



tered on the strategic value of outsourcing, innovative use of outsourced services, and the role of the retained organization.

For instance, in the Blue Ribbon Panel discussion, some of the largest service providers discussed how the HRO model has changed since the market's early years. They spoke about achievement once considered too difficult to reach, such as industry-wide standardization. Mike Wright, sales leader for HRO at Hewitt, noted that service providers have made significant strides recently in delivering outsourcing services in more cost-effective ways.


"Back in the early days, suppliers didn't have a clue of what multiprocess HR outsourcing was about," he said. "What I've seen in the past five or six years is incredible."

Indicative of the times, numerous speakers at HRO World New York this year pointed to transformation as the driver behind many deals. Buyers such as Abbe Luersman, vice president of total rewards and HR solutions at appliance giant Whirlpool, spoke at the event about her company's engagement in HRO—

which she has said is driven more by strategic needs than by cost savings. Similarly, other buyers such as Warren Pfister, director of HR customer services at Lockheed Martin, shared his experience as one of the first generation of HRO buyers. A member of the Buyers Group—the informal association of enterprise HRO customers—Lockheed Martin recently renewed its contract with ACS.

But more than just a gathering of buyers sharing their experience with outsourcing, HRO World New York continues to serve as a forum in which new buyers learn more about outsourcing and the providers that serve the marketplace. For the HRO industry, it is still a place where millions of dollars in contracts are secured.

This year's conference also featured the Third Annual HRO Association Awards Dinner, in which SAP's Christian Baader received the Person of the Year Award. (See sidebar for a list of all of this year's winners.)

HRO World New York, organized by Human Resource Executive, is scheduled next year at the Hilton April 15-17. 

Hundreds turned out for this year's HROA Awards Dinner.



HRO Association 2007 Awards Recipients

Person of the Year
Christian Baader, SAP

Thought Leader of the Year
Steve Shangold, RPOworldwide

**Large Market Provider
of the Year**
Accenture HR Services

**Middle Market Provider
of the Year**
ADP

**Customer Relationship
of the Year, Large Market**
ADP & IKEA

**Customer Relationship
of the Year, Middle Market**
Accenture BPO Services,
Solutions for the Middle Market
& Catalina Restaurants

Buyer Executive of the Year
Sue Gooch, British Telecom

Provider Executive of the Year
Michelle Adelman, Accenture HR
Services

Technology Provider of the Year
SAP

RPO Provider of the Year
IBM Recruitment Process
Outsourcing Services

Payroll Provider of the Year
ADP

Relocation Provider of the Year
Cartus

Sourcing Advisor of the Year
Rosemary Collins, TPI

Attorney of the Year
Barbara M. Melby, Morgan Lewis
Janet Parkhurst, Milbank, Tweed,
Hadley & McCloy LLP