

**PREFACE:**

As HR management becomes more complex, greater demands are placed on individuals who make HR their career specialty. Despite the HR criticism, a significant number of individuals have made HR their career field. This topic explains the key competencies needed by HR professionals and why certification is important.

**1- HR COMPETENCIES**

The transformation of HR toward being more strategic has implications for the competencies needed by HR professionals. Views of HR have changed over the years as the needed competencies and the results have differed. Research has indicated that HR professionals at all levels need the following:

- Strategic knowledge and impact means.
- Legal, administrative, and operational capabilities.
- Technology knowledge and usage abilities.

Senior HR leaders may need additional capabilities and competencies:

(a) more business, strategic, HR, and organizational knowledge; (b) ability to lead changes due to credibility; and (c) ethical behavior and results orientation/performance.

For individuals with HR as their career, these competencies help establish their value as professional resources. The changes in organizations and the workforce mean that HR as a career field is being altered and will continue to require more efforts by HR professionals at all levels.

**2- HR MANAGEMENT AS A CAREER FIELD**

A variety of jobs exists within the HR career field, ranging from executive to clerical. As an employer grows large enough to need someone to focus primarily on HR activities, the role of **the HR generalist** emerges—that is, a person who has responsibility for performing a variety of HR activities. Further growth leads to the addition of **HR specialists**, or individuals who have in-depth knowledge and expertise in limited areas of HR. The most common areas of HR specialty, in order of frequency, are benefits, employment and recruitment, and compensation.

**3- HR PROFESSIONALISM AND CERTIFICATION**

Depending on the job, HR professionals may need considerable knowledge about employment regulations, finance, tax law, statistics, and information systems. In most cases, they also need extensive knowledge about specific HR activities. The broad range of issues faced by HR professionals has made involvement in professional associations and organizations important. For HR generalists, the largest organization is the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM).

Public-sector HR professionals tend to be concentrated in the International Personnel Management Association (IPMA). Two other prominent specialized HR organizations are the World at Work Association and the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD).

One characteristic of a professional field is having a means to certify that members have the knowledge and competence needed in the profession. The CPA for accountants and the CLU for life insurance underwriters are examples. Certification can be valuable to individuals and useful to employers as they select and promote certified individuals. The most well-known certification programs for HR generalists are administered by the Human Resource Certification Institute (HRCI), which is affiliated with SHRM. More than 100,000 professionals have an HRCI certification.

### **3-1 HRCI Certification**

The most widely known HR certifications are the Professional in Human Resources (PHR) and the Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR), both sponsored by HRCI. Annually, thousands of individuals take the certification exams. HRCI also sponsors a Global Professional in Human Resources (GPHR) certification. Eligibility requirements for PHR, SPHR, and GPHR certifications have been updated. These requirements, effective 2011. Additionally, eligible individuals must pass the appropriate exam.

### **3-2 World at Work Certifications**

The World at Work Association has certifications emphasizing compensation and benefits. The four certifications are as follows:

- Certified Compensation Professional (CCP)
- Certified Benefits Professional (CBP)
- Certified Work-Life Professional (CWLP)
- Certified Global Remuneration (CGR)

### **3-3 Other HR Certifications**

Increasingly, employers hiring or promoting HR professionals are requesting certifications as a “plus.” HR professionals feel that various HR certifications give them more credibility with corporate peers and senior managers. Additional certification programs for HR specialists and generalists are sponsored by various organizations, and the number of certifications is being expanded. For specialists, some well-known programs include the following:

- Certified Recognition Professional (CRP) sponsored by the Recognition Professionals International.
- Certified Employee Benefits sponsored by the International Foundation of Employee Benefits Plans.

- Certified Professional in Learning and Performance sponsored by the American Society for Training and Development.
- Certified Safety Professional (CSP) and Occupational Health and Safety Technologist (OHST) sponsored by the American Society of Safety Engineers.
- Certified Professional Outsourcing (CSO) provided by the Human Resource Outsourcing Association.
- Certified Graphics Communications Manager (CGCM) and Certified Mail Manager (CMM) sponsored by the International Personnel Management Association.

Most individuals who want to succeed in the field must update their knowledge continually. One way of staying current on HR is to tap information in current HR literature and relevant associations.