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The Human Resource Body of Knowledge

*HRBoK*TM

The way organizations of today utilize the human resource (HR) department tells the story of HR. Some companies continue to view HR as personnel departments and compliance officers, managing the transactions of payroll, processing new hire paperwork, and terminating nonperformers. The second type of company uses human resources to its strategic advantage. Organizations of the second type recognize and support the valued contributions of a high-functioning HR department, delivering outcomes through people management, group management, and ultimately the management and understanding of the organization as a whole (see Figure 1.1).

The Building Blocks

The inconsistencies in the ways companies use their HR competencies mirror nearly perfectly the evolution of the profession. As the business landscape has changed, the HR industry has changed as well, and some businesses and industries have been better at keeping the two aligned than others.

The early twentieth century was characterized by enormous growth in industrialization and the country's labor pool. Large factories in the northern states expanded beyond textiles and into the middle states, creating a boom of work and many lifetime jobs. This industrialization required more workers, and the European immigrant population from countries such as Italy and Hungary grew as a result. Railroads expanded, decreasing the cost of transportation. Workers



Figure 1.1 Human Resource Management

continued to organize for better working conditions. Human resources had a new job, and it was the *industrial relations* manager—relations with labor unions and interactions between humans and processes, and between humans and machines.

Industrial Relations

The relationship between an employer and its employees

The relationship between the management of an industrial enterprise and its employees, as guided by specific laws and regulations

Automating manufacturing processes fostered the development of mass production, bringing a whole new perspective to the workplace. For the first time, U.S. businesses had to think about managing full-scale operations and the people it took to perform them. How should large companies be structured? How should the work be organized? How should people be managed? Personnel became a *staff unit*, an independent department whose job was to advise all *line management* functions.

It wasn't just businesses that were seeking answers. The government took a keen interest in the way these taxpaying giants were behaving, and began influencing how businesses would be run through laws. HR added new responsibilities to its job description: policy maker and *compliance officer*.

Staff Units

People who support line management

Work groups that support the major business of an organization with activities such as accounting, customer service, maintenance, and personnel

Line Management

People who create revenue for organizations

Work groups that conduct the major business of an organization, such as manufacturing or sales

Compliance

Obedience, conforming

Following established laws, guidelines, or rules

As companies evolved and thought leaders of the day discovered that businesses could significantly influence individual employee behavior to achieve strategic goals, the transactional nature of HR work was not enough. Everything was in motion, with a mix of moving targets made up of the competitive and the resource management needs of the business (financial, physical, and knowledge). HR began to address the interpersonal skills of the workforce, applying principles of communication, leadership, and team-building skills. The human relations role of HR came to be. As the market deepened into international waters and competition increased, it became essential to employers that they find, develop, and retain key talent, adding the development and management of a *human capital strategy* to HR's increasingly important role.

Human Capital Strategy

Employment tactics, plan for managing employees

Methods and tools for recruiting, managing, and keeping important employees

The academic and scientific communities were experiencing momentum similar to that of other industries. As technological and economic progress was made in the workplace, psychology and the social sciences were creating a bank of empirical evidence on how best to manage organizational, individual, and group performance through systematic interventions. This work formed the basis for industry best practices around *organizational development*. Enter HR as the behavioral scientist.

Organizational Development

Planned process to improve an organization

Planned process that uses the principles of behavioral science to improve the way an organization functions

Finally, the globalization of the workforce and business structures created a need for HR practices across geographic borders. Decreased trade barriers, the search for new markets, the rapid development of technology, and the rise of e-commerce platforms have all contributed to the internationalization of business. HR was tasked with international human resource management (IHRM) strategies—adapting home country practices to global conditions.

It was and continues to be clear that the evolved HR role of industrial relations, compliance, human relations, strategy, organizational development, and IHRM has formed a powerful discipline from which organizations could push their competitive performance.

The HR Profession

In the late 1960s, a study by Cornell University found that a profession is defined by five main characteristics.¹ They were:

1. A profession must be full-time.
2. A profession must have a national professional association.
3. A profession must have a certification program.
4. A profession must have a code of ethics.
5. Schools and curricula must be aimed specifically at teaching the basic ideas of the profession, and there must be a defined common body of knowledge.

Based on this, the American Society of Personnel Administration (ASPA) began to design a formal human resource profession, seeking to frame the context from which the practice would be performed. These activities included organizing the

existing academic principles into a formal program to teach human resources. It gave influence to the formal association of the ASPA, which morphed eventually into what is now the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). A code of ethics was adopted, serving to guide the highest standards of professional behaviors. In 1973, the ASPA Accreditation Institute (AAI) was formed to meet the professional certification requirements. The first certification exams were given in 1976. The AAI as we know it today is called the Human Resource Certification Institute® (HRCI®).

All of these efforts served to create the six domains of human resource management (HRM). The foundation of *human resources* is built upon the human resource body of knowledge—the HRBoK™.

HR

Human Resources

Function within an organization that focuses on implementing organizational strategy, as well as recruiting, managing performance, and providing direction for the people who work in the organization

The Six Domains

This book is organized according to the six domains of human resources that are rooted in HR's origins, but have evolved to reflect current conditions. These domains are reviewed in more detail next.

Business Management and Strategy

The domain of business management and strategy (BMS) is the area where HR experts look at the organization as a whole while establishing goals and outcomes for its parts. It is the foundation for all other HR activities, providing macro-level direction through strategy development and operational direction through business management.

The goal of this domain is to develop and support the company's mission, vision, and values. HR is expected to shape policies and HR programs around the company identity and employer brand while supporting the behaviors that achieve strategic goals and objectives.

All of the aforementioned outcomes are served when HR professionals are adept at managing change on a local and global scale, and being accepted as organizational leaders (see Figure 1.2).

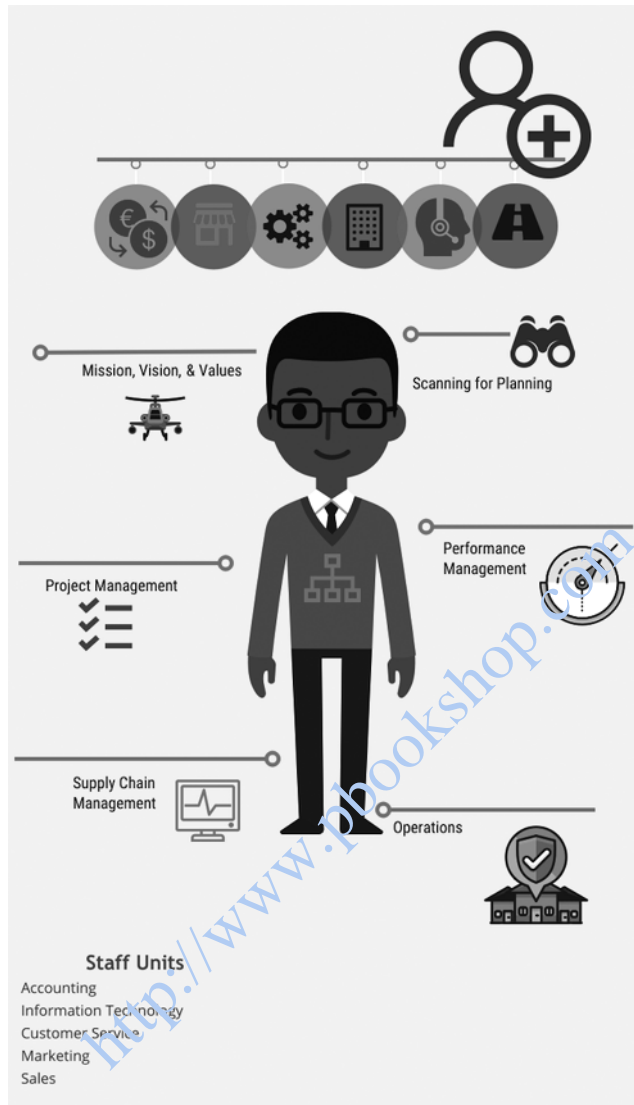


Figure 1.2 The Influence of Contemporary HR

Workforce Planning and Employment

If BMS is strategically focused, the domain of workforce planning and employment (WPE) is operationally focused. This is where HR practitioners are experts in recruitment, selection, and employee separation. These two practices are the bookends of the life cycle of the employee; the other domains address all areas in between (see Figure 1.3).

Key to all the activities of HR in this domain is alignment:

- *Aligning jobs to company goals and activities.* Using the principles of job design, HR supports productivity outcomes through work flow analysis.

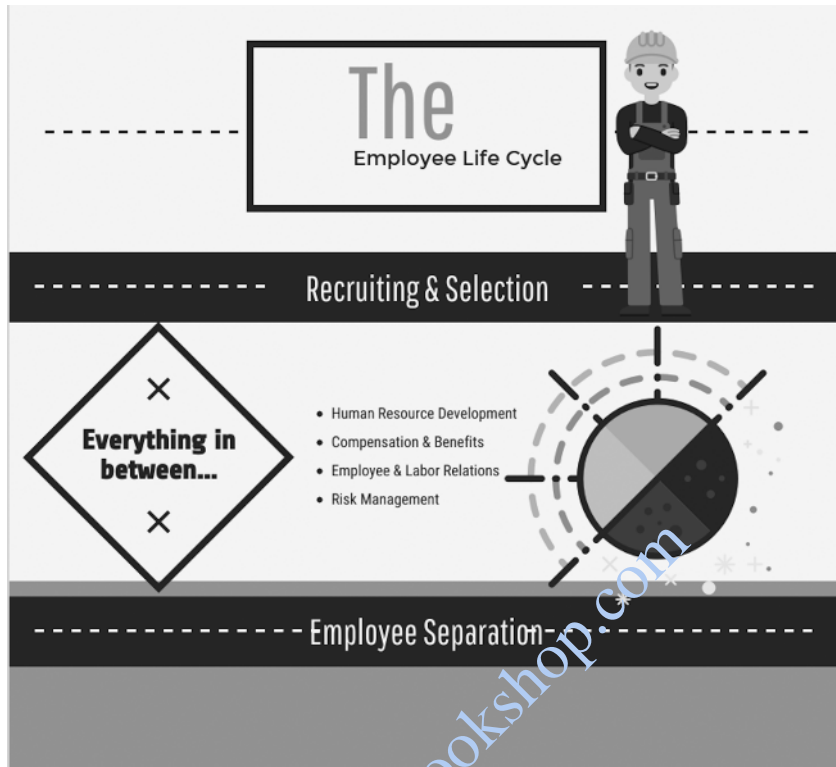


Figure 1.3 The Employee Life Cycle

- *Aligning jobs to people and people to organizations.* This is known as fit. HR uses both job and company data to predict the success of new hires and separate those with poor fit.
- *Aligning resources to strategy.* By systematically reviewing company business plans and strategies, HR determines the human capital requirements to achieve business goals. This includes both staffing up and downsizing.

Human Resource Development

In the domain of human resource development (HRD), HR supports organizational strategies through managing performance. It begins with conducting needs assessments to identify gaps between current performance and the desired state. This is followed by building programs that address the gaps. These programs may be people oriented, such as performance management systems and leadership development, or process oriented, such as through quality initiatives.

Additionally, the management of individuals requires expertise in motivating adults to do the work, developing tools beyond the paycheck. Understanding how

employees learn and paying attention to what employees need form the basis for employee training and development activities.

Compensation and Benefits

While compensation and benefits (CAB) are not the sole motivating factors for workers, poor management of the programs results in highly dissatisfied workers. CAB programs are heavily influenced by the concepts of equity and loyalty:

- Perceptions of justice are very closely linked to CAB programs.
- Compensation and benefits programs increase employee loyalty.

Both of these concepts are linked with the *psychological contract*: the mutual expectation of an exchange of fair behaviors, implied and codified over time through experience. Employers expect employees to do their best work, remain loyal, and stay until work is completed. Employees expect fair pay, promotions, and job security.

Psychological Contract

Beliefs that influence the employee-employer relationship

An unwritten agreement of the mutual beliefs, perceptions, and informal obligations between an employer and an employee, which influence how they interact

The reception other HR programs receive in terms of employee engagement and responsiveness must pass first through the psychological veil of CAB programs. Additionally, employers need their CAB programs to remain competitive while dealing with increasing labor and health care costs. Employers pay a cost above and beyond employee base wages, and this burden must be factored into the design of all CAB programs to deliver a return on investment (ROI) and retain the company's value (see Figure 1.4).

Employee and Labor Relations

Key to understanding and practicing human resources is knowing that each domain is connected and dependent upon the functioning of each department. When one domain of HR is dysfunctional, performance in the other domains is, to varying

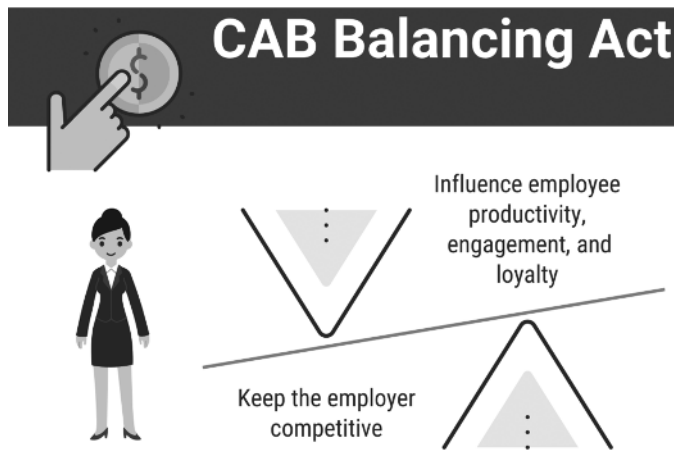


Figure 1.4 CAB Balancing Act

degrees, impaired as well. Perhaps in no other area is this as true as in employee and labor relations (ELR). The management of the relationship between the employer and the employee forms the energy of the company culture, the pulse of employee performance. The artful practice of communication is the conduit through which information flows, and determines both the speed of transfer and the obstacles encountered along the way.

It is in this domain that discipline and terminations are processed and management under the watchful eye of an employee union is done. Both of these conditions may be fraught with emotion and conflict, requiring the true advocacy role of human resources to be practiced, serving the needs of both the employer and the employee.

Risk Management

Risk management (RM) is the domain of HR that manages employee health, safety, and security, along with protecting the employer from loss and liability. Identifying personnel as human assets, while impersonal, does give clarity to the need for protection. HR is tasked with protecting all assets of the organization, from the human to the physical and, in the twenty-first century, the information assets for all stakeholders. Employers have a duty of care regarding their workers, and an obligation to protect the company from risk. Both are underscored by compliance with safety, security, and governance laws.

Education and prevention are at the heart of all RM programs. When employees understand the hazards associated with their work and are taught how to protect themselves from said hazards, then injuries, accidents, and near misses decrease. When financial and purchasing accountability processes are developed, controls are introduced to protect assets.

HR helps the companies they serve conduct risk assessments, working with internal and external experts to identify threats and build behavioral and environmental controls to reduce exposure. Response plans must be built and tested for if (when) the controls fail, and refined as conditions change.

Stakeholder

An interest holder in an organization

A person, group, or organization that has a direct or indirect interest in the organization (for example, owners, investors, employees, suppliers, unions, or the community)

The Age of Organizational Behavior

Gary Vaynerchuk tweeted² that a company environment is about the people, not about whether there is a foosball table in the break room; this is a great example of the bridge between human relations and organizational behavior (OB). By definition, OB is both theory based and practically applied, using analytical techniques of people, group, and organizational factors. Kinicki and Fugate in their phenomenal book *Organizational Behavior*³ defined OB's focus as managing people within and between individual, group, and organizational levels.

Human relations formed in response to evidence that organizational behavior influences individual behavior. How people are treated, and how they *think* (perceive) they are being treated makes a difference in how they perform. For this reason, companies began investing and experimenting with the human side of production as opposed to focusing only on outputs. The quality of leadership, the way communication flowed, and the way coworkers interact formed best practices to engage and retain a talented workforce.

Capital is an interesting word meaning "wealth in the form of assets" (www.businessdictionary.com). This definition and that of human capital are rooted in possibility: If a company has financial assets, it can direct those resources to solve problems. Similarly, if a company has a wealth of knowledge workers, it can deploy them to solve problems, take advantage of opportunities, and, ultimately, successfully compete in its market. A current or future employee with the right knowledge, skills, and abilities represents a company's ultimate ability to both sustain its

existence and thrive by taking advantage of opportunities and reducing threats through the power of its people. The individual talents of the employees influence the overall competencies of a group, collectively accumulating to drive organizational performance.⁴

In this way, organizational behavior and human relations must drive the management of the human resources of public, private, and nonprofit businesses. This translates into the design of HR programs, policies, and processes that influences not only the behaviors of the people, but the behavior of the organization as well.

Structuring Human Resource Departments

In every sense, all managers are HR managers. They are responsible for making hiring decisions, providing performance feedback, making recommendations for training and promotions, and taking corrective action when necessary. As a company grows, these responsibilities may get lost or diluted under the increased burden of operations. Additionally, asking managers to keep track of the labor compliance factors—which become increasingly onerous as employers add staff—is unrealistic and risky. As the company grows, so does the need for a structured human resource department.

A quick Google search of the phrase “human resource job titles” resulted in these first five:

1. Category Manager, HR
2. Chief Happiness Officer
3. Chief Human Resources Officer
4. Chief People Officer
5. Client Facing Human Resources Specialist

There is some speculation that “human resource” is out of date in a job title, failing to reflect the complex roles and responsibilities of this discipline. This is evidenced by the five job titles listed, but also by a growing trend by large companies such as UPS, Adobe, and Airbnb to include “employee experience” in the titles and job responsibilities of their HR talent.

Regardless of what they are called, most companies staff their human resource departments based on the total number of employees. Typically, a company will hire someone to focus solely on human resource tasks when it reaches 80 employees. While the first hire could be administrative, operational, or strategic, most midsize companies find they need an operationally oriented hire to provide midlevel support. Priority tasks include managing payroll, recruitment, selection, and training. These roles are reviewed next.

Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, RIASEC

There are three resources in this section that are used to illustrate the talent structure of an HR department. They are:

1. *U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) O*NET*. The DOL undertook a formal job analysis of nearly every job in the United States, collecting information from employers on job content, context, tasks, duties, responsibilities, work environment, and much more. This section calls upon the DOL's findings to provide examples of how companies are utilizing their HR talent.
2. *U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Occupational Handbook Outlook*. The BLS compiled and continues to provide regular updates to the outlook of jobs in the United States, including projected growth.
3. *Holland's RIASEC (realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional) model of vocational choice*. This model of personality demonstrates the interests of individuals who gravitate toward work in the HR field. The DOL used the RIASEC to identify work interests. Holland believed six personality factors influence career choice. They are:
 1. **Realistic (doers)** Realistic occupations frequently involve work activities that include practical, hands-on problems and solutions. They often deal with plants, animals, and real-world materials like wood, tools, and machinery. Many of the occupations require working outside, and do not involve a lot of paperwork or working closely with others.
 2. **Investigative (thinkers)** Investigative occupations frequently involve working with ideas, and require an extensive amount of thinking. These occupations can involve searching for facts and figuring out problems mentally.
 3. **Artistic (creators)** Artistic occupations frequently involve working with forms, designs, and patterns. They often require self-expression, and the work can be done without following a clear set of rules.
 4. **Social (helpers)** Social occupations frequently involve working with, communicating with, and teaching people. These occupations often involve helping or providing services to others.
 5. **Enterprising (persuasive)** Enterprising occupations frequently involve starting up and carrying out projects. These occupations can involve leading people and making many decisions. Sometimes they require risk taking and often deal with business.
 6. **Conventional (organizers)** Conventional occupations frequently involve following set procedures and routines. These occupations can include working with data and details more than with ideas. Usually there is a clear line of authority to follow.

Table 1.1 The RIASEC Model and Those Who Choose HR

	Doers: Realistic	Thinkers: Investigative	Creators: Artistic	Helpers: Social	Persuaders: Enterprising	Organizers: Conventional
Human resource manager				X	X	X
Human resource specialist				X	X	X
Training and development manager				X	X	X
Compensation, benefits, and job analysis specialists					X	X
Payroll and timekeeping clerks					X	X

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, O*NET.

The RIASEC model and corresponding theory of vocational choice, when applied to the sample HR jobs listed in Table 1.1, reveal a trend in the types of folks attracted to the work of HR. This data should be used by organizers of a human resource department to ensure they get the right blend of talent into the department, and consider any service gaps based on the current personality mix of the department and needs of the company.

Human Resource Manager: Enterprising, Social, Conventional

Characterized by the RIASEC as “persuasive helpers who like to organize,” human resource managers plan, direct, and coordinate the administrative functions of an organization. They oversee the recruiting, interviewing, and hiring of new staff; consult with top executives on strategic planning; and serve as a link between an organization’s management and its employees.

Work Styles

1. **Integrity** Job requires being honest and ethical.
2. **Stress tolerance** Job requires accepting criticism and dealing calmly and effectively with high-stress situations.

3. **Leadership** Job requires a willingness to lead, take charge, and offer opinions and direction.
4. **Dependability** Job requires being reliable, responsible, and dependable, and fulfilling obligations.
5. **Initiative** Job requires a willingness to take on responsibilities and challenges.

Job Outlook

Employment of human resource managers is projected to grow 9 percent from 2014 to 2024, faster than the average for all occupations. As new companies form and organizations expand their operations, they will need human resource managers to oversee and administer their programs, and to ensure firms adhere to changing and complex employment laws. Strong competition can be expected for most positions.

Human Resource Specialist: Enterprising, Conventional, Social

Human resource specialists recruit, screen, interview, and place workers. They often handle other types of human resource work, such as those related to employee relations, compensation and benefits, and training.

Tasks

Human resource specialists perform tasks such as:

- Prepare or maintain employment records related to events, such as hiring, termination, leaves, transfers or promotions, using human resources management system software.
- Interpret and explain human resources policies, procedures, laws, standards, or regulations.
- Hire employees and process hiring-related paperwork.
- Inform job applicants of details such as duties and responsibilities, compensation, benefits, schedules, working conditions, or promotion opportunities.
- Address employee relations issues, such as harassment allegations, work complaints, or other employee concerns.

Job Outlook

Employment of human resource specialists is projected to grow 5 percent from 2014 to 2024, about as fast as the average for all occupations. Human resource

specialists will be needed to handle increasingly complex employment laws and health care coverage options. Most growth is projected to be in the employment services industry.

Compensation, Benefits, and Job Analysis Specialists: Conventional, Enterprising

Compensation, benefits, and job analysis specialists conduct an organization's compensation and benefits programs. They also evaluate position descriptions to determine details such as a person's classification and salary.

Work Styles

1. **Integrity** Job requires being honest and ethical.
2. **Analytical thinking** Job requires analyzing information and using logic to address work-related issues and problems.
3. **Attention to detail** Job requires being careful about detail and thorough in completing work tasks.
4. **Dependability** Job requires being reliable, responsible, and dependable, and fulfilling obligations.
5. **Adaptability/flexibility** Job requires being open to change (positive or negative) and to considerable variety in the workplace.

Job Outlook

Employment of compensation, benefits, and job analysis specialists is projected to grow 4 percent from 2014 to 2024, more slowly than the average for all occupations. Outsourcing compensation and benefits plans to consulting firms will limit employment growth in most industries. Job prospects should be best for those with previous human resources work experience.

Training and Development Managers: Conventional, Enterprising, Social

Training and development managers plan, direct, and coordinate programs to enhance the knowledge and skills of an organization's employees. They also oversee a staff of training and development specialists.

Tasks

Training and development managers perform tasks such as:

- Prepare training budget for department or organization.
- Evaluate instructor performance and the effectiveness of training programs, providing recommendations for improvement.
- Analyze training needs to develop new training programs or modify and improve existing programs.
- Conduct or arrange for ongoing technical training and personal development classes for staff members.
- Plan, develop, and provide training and staff development programs, using knowledge of the effectiveness of methods such as classroom training, demonstrations, on-the-job training, meetings, conferences, and workshops.

Job Outlook

Employment of training and development managers is projected to grow 7 percent from 2014 to 2024, about as fast as the average for all occupations. Job prospects should be very good, particularly in industries with a lot of regulation, like finance and insurance.

Payroll and Timekeeping Clerks: Conventional, Enterprising

Payroll and timekeeping clerks compile and record employee time and payroll data. They may compute employees' time worked, production, and commissions, and may compute and post wages and deductions, or prepare paychecks.

Tasks

Payroll and timekeeping clerks perform tasks such as:

- Process and issue employee paychecks and statements of earnings and deductions.
- Compute wages and deductions, and enter data into computers.
- Review time sheets, work charts, wage computation, and other information to detect and reconcile payroll discrepancies.
- Compile employee time, production, and payroll data from time sheets and other records.
- Process paperwork for new employees and enter employee information into the payroll system.

From HR to Employee Experience

As alluded to in the Introduction, HR has a bit of an identity crisis, and it's no wonder with the rapid growth and elevation of business needs of the past several decades. The fracturing of the industry through manufactured or generic job titles has not served HR's overall credibility well. Companies that don't know how to use HR will not use HR. They will rely instead on the status quo: performance management systems that nearly everybody agrees are unsatisfactory, hope as a workforce strategy, and boxing HR into compliance and transactional exchanges between people. Of course, not all companies do this; many are tapping into the strategic competencies of their HR leaders to drive the change from "HR" to "employee experience." The point is that HR leaders take control and participate in the adaptations of the HR profession where appropriate, lending their voices and best practices to mold the discipline, and committing to their own professional development through the activities described in the next section.

The Development of HR Competencies

Competencies are defined as the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) necessary to do a job well. Senior leaders must be able to develop strategy and lead change. Generalists must have a working grasp on labor law. All HR staff must understand the fundamental activities of an HR department.

Competencies

The abilities needed to do well in a specific job

The skills, behaviors, and knowledge that are needed to succeed in a specific job

Human Resource Manager

While no two companies have HR management needs that are exactly alike, there are fundamentals to the KSAs and work activities of a functional human resource department. The following uses information from the DOL to identify the required competencies of an HR manager that apply across industrial, geographic, and other divides.

Knowledge

Personnel and human resources Knowledge of principles and procedures for personnel recruitment, selection, training, compensation and benefits, labor relations and negotiation, and personnel information systems.

Clerical Knowledge of administrative and clerical procedures and systems such as word processing, managing files and records, stenography and transcription, designing forms, and other office procedures and terminology.

Administration and management Knowledge of business and management principles involved in strategic planning, resource allocation, human resources modeling, leadership technique, production methods, and coordination of people and resources.

Customer and personal service Knowledge of principles and processes for providing customer and personal services. This includes customer needs assessment, meeting quality standards for services, and evaluation of customer satisfaction.

Skills

Active listening Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.

Speaking Talking to others to convey information effectively.

Reading comprehension Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work-related documents.

Critical thinking Using logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions, or approaches to problems.

Abilities

Oral comprehension The ability to listen to and understand information and ideas presented through spoken words and sentences.

Oral expression The ability to communicate information and ideas in speaking so others will understand.

Written comprehension The ability to read and understand information and ideas presented in writing.

Work Activities

Communicating with supervisors, peers, or subordinates Providing information to supervisors, coworkers, and subordinates by telephone, in written form, by e-mail, or in person.

Getting information Observing, receiving, and otherwise obtaining information from all relevant sources.

Interacting with computers Using computers and computer systems (including hardware and software) to program, write software, set up functions, enter data, or process information.

Staffing organizational units Recruiting, interviewing, selecting, hiring, and promoting employees in an organization.

Consider the KSAs and work activities in the context of hiring for this role. What job related preemployment tests might you use to predict success on the job? What interview questions might you write to determine fit? What instrument would you use to measure oral expression and written comprehension?

As the title search results suggest, organizations are grappling with how to best utilize current and developing competencies of the HR industry. The purpose of the HRBoK is to provide the blueprint from which the business and HR leaders of today may build out their HR culture: the cultivation of living things. Adopting the HRBoK throughout organizations and academia ensures consistency in the profession, weaving integrated patterns of knowledge and practice to affect organizational performance. HR must be an adaptive, learning industry, one with a never-ending capacity for professional development and growth while still performing from best practice benchmarks.

Degrees

Most colleges and universities have robust human resource management programs from which formal degrees are available. It is worth using curriculum as a filter through which to understand what the academic community believes to be important elements to the practice of HR.

For example, human resource undergrads at DePaul University will be educated in areas such as training and career development, compensation and benefits, and recruitment and selection. Other required courses include labor economics, leadership and global human resource management, and organizational development.

As you can see by the core requirements, the curriculum invests heavily in the ability of human resources to be proficient in the six domains of the HRBoK while incorporating global influences within and outside of the United States. This includes viewing the competitive marketplace through the lens of a *global organization*. When this concept is applied to HR, it reflects the need for human resource

professionals to develop competencies in management of one labor market and all its diverse components.

Global Organization

An organization that views the world as one market

An organization that views the whole world as one market, and does not divide it into separate markets by country

Other universities run HR certificate programs, which develop student proficiencies in human resource and leadership through classes, workshops, and on-site training. Continuing an HR education is a best practice that serves the student, the employer, and the employees who are dependent upon the HR practitioner to take their role seriously. See Figure 1.5 for a view of the cascading transmission of HR and business knowledge and competencies from the sciences to the workplace.

Professional Certification: Seven and Strong

Achieving professional human resource *certification* is a mark of excellence and commitment. Certification programs are different from certificate programs such as the ones offered at many universities. Certification programs:

- Require specific experience and education.
- Require recertification, making sure your skills stay up to date.
- Allow you to put the letters after your name.

The credentials demonstrate *mastery* over the three e's: education, experience, and an exam covering a body of knowledge and practical competencies to designate a person as a dedicated, credible practitioner. When hiring in the human resource field, any one of HRCI's seven *credentials* serves as a reference of talent within the scope of the HR discipline.

While you can't teach talent, you can certainly influence the exponential effect that professional certification will have on a career. Talent without direction literally has no place to go. Professional certification is an integral piece in a *career management* system that can address many of the moving parts of knowledge and competency that will serve an individual's desire for a career path paved with excellence, confidence, job satisfaction, and pay increases. If we can't create a logical, systematic career path for ourselves, how will HR be able to do it for employees?

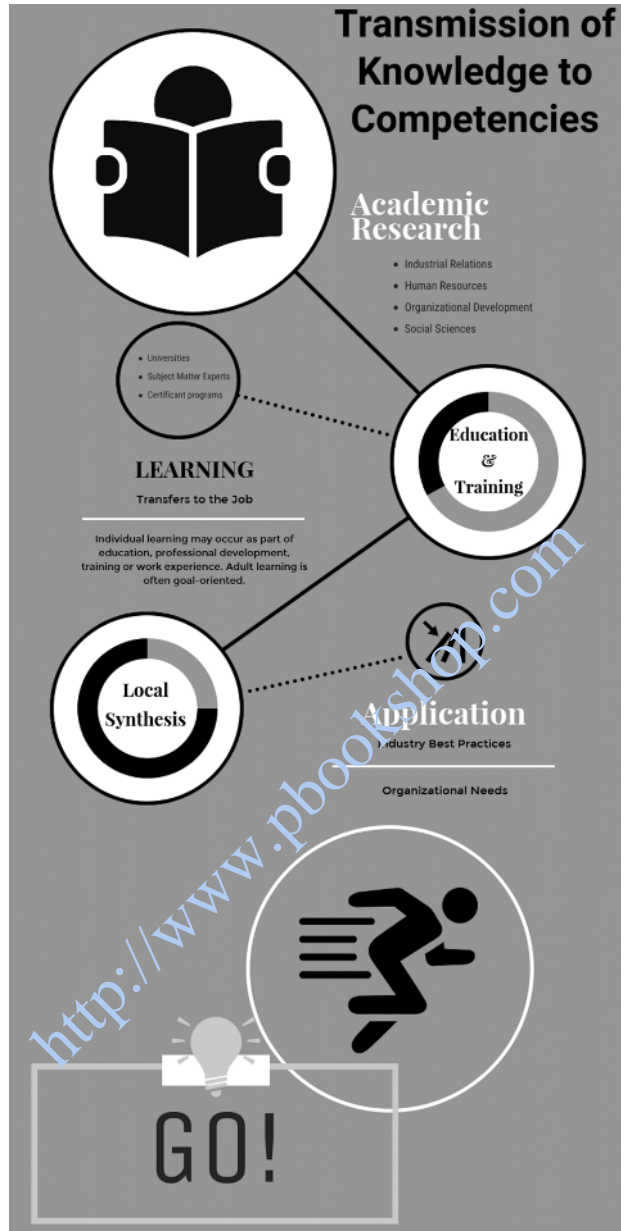


Figure 1.5 Transmission of Knowledge to Competencies

Certification

A procedure to grant an official designation

Confirmation of specific achievements or characteristics given by an authority, usually by issuing a certificate or diploma after a test

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Mastery

Ability, expertise

Great ability and knowledge of some subject or activity

Credentials

Certified documents, diplomas

Proof of a person's earned authority, status, or rights, usually in writing (for example, a university diploma, a digital certification badge, or other proof of passing a professional exam)

Career Management

Planning and controlling the professional development of an employee

Preparing, implementing, and monitoring the career path of employees, with a focus on the goals and needs of the organization

The Importance of Accreditation

Accreditation through the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) for professional or personnel certification programs provides validation from an impartial third party that the program has met recognized national and international credentialing industry standards for development, implementation, and maintenance of certification programs. The NCCA describes accreditation as the number one reason to choose one professional certification over another. It's important to note that there are only a few accrediting bodies (such as NCCA and ANSI) that evaluate a whole certification program; others validate only the exam instrument itself.

HRCI certifications are also the only accredited HR certification program in the market, and have been in place for over 40 years.

—from HRCI.org;

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The NCCA standards were developed to highlight the essential elements of a high-quality program, focusing on the processes and products of certification organizations. In order to be applicable to all professions and industries, the

NCCA standards do not evaluate exam content. The NCCA determined that program content validity is demonstrated with a comprehensive job analysis conducted and analyzed by experts, with data gathered from experts and practitioners.

HRCI's certification exam items and exam forms are developed and peer reviewed by subject matter experts with diverse HR experience developed in numerous industries, company sizes and levels of expertise. Each exam is built based on an exam blueprint (Exam Content Outline) which is developed through a structured, research-based practice analysis study. All exams are competency-based and all but the aPHR are practice-based and require demonstrated professional-level HR experience.

—from HRCI.org;

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The Exams

Headquartered in the United States, HRCI has been credentialing human resource professionals for decades.

As an independent nonprofit organization, the company follows an accredited practice to certify human resources professionals over seven exams. These exams deliver upon HRCI's vision that "People and organizations perform better because of us."

The bank of seven certification exams is reviewed next.⁵

aPHR

The newest of HRCI's seven professional-level exams, the aPHR exam is appropriate for an entry-level HR practitioner with a high school diploma or global equivalent. It is also an excellent choice for someone who has been in human resources, but does not meet the exempt level requirement to test for one of the other exams. The aPHR exam content is sorted into six functional areas:

1. HR Operations
2. Recruitment and Selection
3. Compensation and Benefits
4. Human Resource Development and Retention
5. Employee Relations
6. Health, Safety, and Security

The tasks that may be expected of an aPHR candidate are represented in Table 1.2. Hiring a successfully credentialed aPHR candidate means that employers may rely on the new hire to perform many of the administrative duties of HR, from coordinating orientation, on-boarding, and training to maintaining data for employee record keeping throughout all functions of HR. Operationally, aPHR

Table 1.2 Typical aPHR Tasks

Administrative	Operational	Strategic
Access, collect, and provide information and data to support HR-related decisions (for example, recruiting, employee relations, training, safety, budgeting, needs analysis, off-boarding, termination)	Comply with all applicable laws and regulations Coordinate and communicate with external providers of HR services (for example, recruiters, COBRA administrators, employee recognition services)	Communicate the organization's core values, vision, mission, culture, and ethical behaviors
Maintain employee data in human resource information system (HRIS) or system of record	Provide internal customer service by answering or referring HR-related questions from employees as the first level of support	
Maintain, file, and process HR forms (for example, notices, announcements, new hire forms, salary forms, performance, termination paperwork)	Communicate information about HR policies and procedures Identify risk in the workplace Minimize risk by conducting audits (for example, I-9, workers' compensation, employee records)	
Prepare HR-related documents (for example, reports, presentations, organizational charts)	Document and update essential job functions with the support of managers	
Post job listings (for example, company website, social media, job boards)	Screen applicants for managers to interview	
Manage applicant databases (for example, enter data, access records, update records)	Answer questions from job applicants Interview job candidates	
Coordinate interview logistics	Communicate compensation and benefits programs and systems	
Arrange for tests and assessments of applicants		
Coordinate the employment offer (for example, start date, salary, benefits)	Coordinate activities to support employee benefits programs (for example, wellness, retirement planning)	
Administer postoffer employment activities (for example, execute employment agreements, complete I-9/e-Verify process, coordinate relocation, immigration)	Resolve routine employee compensation and benefits issues	

Administrative	Operational	Strategic
Coordinate payroll-related information (for example, new hires, adjustments, paid time off, terminations)	Conduct orientation and onboarding for new hires, rehires, and transfers	
Process claims from employees (for example, workers' compensation, short-term or long-term disability benefits)	Conduct employee training programs (for example, safety regulations, emergency preparedness, presentation skills, time management skills)	
Coordinate training sessions (for example, logistics, materials, tracking, registration, evaluation)	Monitor completion of performance reviews and development plans	
Coordinate the logistics for employee relations programs (for example, recognition, special events, diversity programs)		

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candidates are well versed in processes that provide employee support by being knowledgeable about compensation and benefits, policies, procedures, and essential job functions.

The aPHR exam is 2 hours and 15 minutes in length, and comprises 100 multiple-choice questions and 25 pretest questions.

Professional in Human Resources, California[®] (PHRca[®])

This is currently the only exam that is state specific, focusing on Compensation/Wage and Hour, Employment and Employee Relations, Benefits and Leaves of Absence, and Health, Safety, and Workers' Compensation. To be eligible, individuals must have one of the following:

- At least one year of experience in a professional-level HR position + a master's degree or higher,
- At least two years of experience in a professional-level HR position + a bachelor's degree, or
- At least four years of experience in a professional-level HR position + a high school diploma.

This exam has 100 scored and 25 pretest questions, and is administered over a 2-hour, 15-minute time frame.

Professional in Human Resources[®] (PHR[®]) and *Senior Professional in Human Resources*[®] (SPHR[®])

The PHR and the SPHR exams share core content. They are designed to measure a candidate's knowledge and competencies in the six functional areas described in this book:

1. Business Management and Strategy
2. Workforce Planning and Employment
3. Human Resource Development
4. Compensation and Benefits
5. Employee and Labor Relations
6. Risk Management

The Professional in Human Resources exam supports HR professionals with generalist or operational titles. These professionals generally focus on the HR operation as opposed to the operation of the organization as a whole. The PHR is both knowledge and competency based, requiring successful candidates to have one of the following:

- At least one year of experience in a professional-level HR position + a master's degree or higher,
- At least two years of experience in a professional-level HR position + a bachelor's degree, or
- At least four years of experience in a professional-level HR position + a high school diploma.

In addition to these HR knowledge and competency requirements, a Senior Professional in Human Resources adds the dimension of executive-level strategic planning to his or her value set. An SPHR has a breadth and depth of knowledge in the functions of human resources and the functions of business. Eligible candidates will have one of the following:

- At least four years of experience in a professional-level HR position + a master's degree or higher,
- At least five years of experience in a professional-level HR position + a bachelor's degree, or
- At least seven years of experience in a professional-level HR position + a high school diploma.

Both the PHR and SPHR exams are 3 hours long, and are 150 questions with 25 pretest questions in length.

Global Professional in Human Resources® (GPHR®)

As much of this book's content reflects, there is a growing need for aligned global professionals with *cross-border* human resource experience. Competent professionals are eligible to sit for the 3-hour GPHR exam, consisting of 140 + 25 pretest questions, if they have one of the following:

- At least two years of experience in a global professional-level HR position + a master's degree or higher,
- At least three years of experience in a professional-level HR position (at least two in global HR) + a bachelor's degree, or
- At least four years of experience in a professional-level HR position (at least two in global HR) + a high school diploma.

Professional in Human Resources, International® (PHRI®) and Senior Professional in Human Resources, International® (SPHRI®)

A recent addition to the bank of seven exams are the PHRI and SPHRI international. As their titles suggest, these exams are appropriate for HR leaders practicing in a country outside the United States. PHRI-eligible candidates have work experience in a single international setting using technical and operational principles, and are tested with 145 + 25 pretest questions in a 3-hour, 15-minute period. Certificate seekers are eligible if they have one of the following:

- At least one year of experience in a professional-level HR position + a master's degree or global equivalent,
- At least two years of experience in a professional-level HR position + a bachelor's degree or global equivalent, or
- At least four years of experience in a professional-level HR position + a high school diploma or global equivalent.

SPHRI candidate careers have been more oriented toward senior-level HR competencies across multiple HR domains within a single international setting. To be eligible for the exam, SPHRI candidates must have one of the following:

- At least one year of experience in a professional-level HR position + a master's degree or global equivalent,
- At least two years of experience in a professional-level HR position + a bachelor's degree or global equivalent, or
- At least four years of experience in a professional-level HR position + a high school diploma or global equivalent.

The SPHRi exam is administered over 2 and a half hours, with 105 + 25 pretest multiple-choice questions.

Cross-Border

Country to country

Taking place across the geographic boundaries of two or more countries (for example, cross-border trade)

How the Exams Are Scored

The *Angoff method* is a way to establish exam scoring standards. It is used by test developers to determine a passing score. Subject matter experts (SMEs) evaluate the content of each exam question and predict how many minimally qualified test takers would get the correct answer. An average of the judges' scores is used to establish the cutoff for a passing grade.

Each exam taker seeking to pass one of the seven exams will take a test that includes pretest questions. These are questions that are being evaluated for validity and level of difficulty before they are rotated into the scored bank of tests used to determine an individual score. In this way, the integrity of the process and the quality of the exam item are measured.

All of HRCI's exams are pass-or-fail based on a range of scores from 100 to 700. Successful candidates will achieve a minimum *scaled score* of 500. The raw score is the actual number of items answered correctly on the test. The scaled score represents the difficulty level of the random exam the test taker received, and is shown only to those who do not pass.

It is recommended that you do *not* leave a question unanswered. Scoring is based on the number of correct answers, so leaving an item blank eliminates the possibility of that item counting in your scaled score.

Angoff Method

An exam scoring process

A way to set the standard score for passing a test

Scaled Score

An adjusted score

A conversion of a raw score to a common scale that can be used for comparison

How to Prepare for Exams

The most important step toward a successful exam experience is to ensure you select the proper exam. The practice of human resources requires lifelong learning through a mix of professional development activities. Starting with the PHR before the SPHR, for example, gives you the opportunity to develop benchmark knowledge and learn the operational job content of those you will eventually be managing. Measuring yourself against the content of the PHRi before the SPHRi ensures that you have a quality platform from which to base all other professional development activities. Certification is a journey, not an event.

Very few individuals sit for these exams with little or no preparation. The degree to which you prepare is based on your unique work experience and education and should include a mix of activities to ensure you are looking at the content from multiple perspectives.

Consider Exam Content Weights

The exam content outline for each of the exams shows the percentage of content for each functional area. This serves as a guide for test takers to know where to concentrate their study efforts.

Practice Exams

Certification seekers must conduct their own type of *gap analysis* to identify where they are compared to where they want to be. HRCI offers practice exams for most of the test banks. The practice exam results show your individual score in each functional area, allowing you to concentrate your study effort in the area where it is most needed.

Gap Analysis

A technique used to compare the current state with the future desired state

An analysis process that helps organizations or people compare their actual performance with their potential performance

Study Groups versus Self-Study Methods

There is no single way to study for these exams that is best. Knowing your individual *learning style* and personality will help you choose whether to go it alone or join a group to help prepare for your chosen exam.

Study groups have the advantage of learning from each other, holding one another accountable to stay on track. It is helpful to have others encourage you when you need it, and clarify content when necessary. Study groups can be self-formed, but many are led by experts who can guide you through exam content.

Successful self-studiers are those who have a high degree of self-discipline and are committed to the process. Staying organized and on track and reaching out to alternative resources when content is new or complex characterize those for whom self-studying is best.

Techniques for both groups should include reading content from exam prep resources, watching videos from credible sources, creating presentations focused on critical content, and *always* seeking to find ways to relate exam content to the job.

Both approaches should utilize an 8-, 12-, or 14-week study plan to work through the exam content outline.

Learning Style

The way a person learns

The way people process new information and learn most effectively (for example, some people learn best visually, through lectures, or by reading. Others learn best by action or doing)

The Importance of Recertification

Newly certified HR professionals need to recertify every three years. This is achieved by engaging in professional development activities designed to increase the depth of existing knowledge, or to learn something new related to the domains of HR. Successful exam takers may recertify credentials in one of two ways: retake the exam or earn credits. Many choose to earn the 60 recertification credits over the three-year active window rather than sit for the rather difficult exam again.

Approved recertification activities fall into any of the following categories:

Continuing education Part of the HRCI code of ethics is that HR professionals commit to professional development. This is achieved through formal and continuing education activities such as classes, workshops, seminars, and webinars.

Instruction Teaching an HR class or a topic on which you're an expert is another way to earn recertification credits. Instruction can be paid or voluntary.

On-the-job training (OJT) Training that occurs on the job is valuable, as these exams are experienced based. These types of credits need to be for tasks or responsibilities that are new to your role.

Research/publications With the abundance of online publishing, blogs, and e-newsletters, plenty of opportunities are out there for you to write on an HR topic that may be trending or of interest to other professionals.

Leadership Leading teams or projects or groups through interventions is another way to log recertification hours. Keeping track of any documentation that demonstrates the nature of the leadership, the relation to exam content, and the amount of time spent is important for your recertification application.

Professional membership Log any professional memberships you have in local, industrial, national, or global associations for additional credits.

While many pre-approved programs are available, you may submit work or educational activities for consideration with your recertification activities.

An easy way to track recertification credits is to regularly log into your HRCI account, and submit credit activities as you achieve them. When the time comes to recertify, you simply review for accuracy and submit, rather than scroll back through e-mails and calendars for dates, locations, content, and credits.

Once successfully certified, don't forget to claim your digital badge! Proof of your certification, this digital seal can be used on social media, e-mails, personal websites, and resumes. The badges securely link to HRCI to verify your active credential, protecting the integrity of the reference.

HRBoK™

The practice of HR is influenced by academia, politics, the economy, technology, and globalization. It draws upon research from the disciplines of psychology, anthropology, the social sciences, and business management. If that isn't enough, HR professionals must be intimate with the details and nuances of the industries in which they practice, such as finance, health care, manufacturing, and construction. HR professionals must be lifelong learners, as the practice of HR adapts as research emerges and business conditions change. Those who do not seek to advance their knowledge run the risk of becoming irrelevant in a very short period of time or of damaging their relationships with employers and employees through errors and omissions.

The HRBoK™ is the helix of human resources, a learning DNA shaped by past practices and evolving needs. Organic in nature, it reflects the need for an organization's human resources to serve in a consulting role more often than a policing role. It underscores the value of fostering a performance culture across all company departments through thoughtful, systematic programs with clear targets and regular measurements. The HRBoK positions practitioners to globally represent the discipline of HR with up-to-date and relevant best practices while functioning



Figure 1.6 Human Resource DNA

under the highest professional standards in service to the stakeholders who are counting on them. In short, the HRBoK is the cornerstone for a community in practice (see Figure 1.6).

Notes

1. HR Certification Institute, "A Brief History." Retrieved from <https://www.hrci.org/about-hrci/overview/history>.
2. Gary Vaynerchuk, "Work Required," September 14, 2016, [Twitter.com/dailyvee](https://twitter.com/dailyvee).
3. A. Kinicki and M. Fugate, *Organizational Behavior* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2011).
4. Ibid.
5. Exam eligibility and accreditation details found on pages 23–31 are used with permission by Human Resource Certification Institute, Inc.