

CHRP review highlights

HR's strategic role

Changes to professional capabilities to appear in October exam

BY SHANNON KLIE

HUMAN RESOURCES' drive to become more strategic was reflected in a recent review of the capabilities needed to receive the Certified Human Resources Professional (CHRP) designation, according to the chief executive officer of the Ottawa-based Canadian Council of Human Resources Associations (CCHRA).

"People are much more strategic about their HR decisions than they ever have been in the past and we want to make sure that the capabilities keep up with that," said Lynn Palmer.

The CCHRA's required professional capabilities (RPCs) are based on the core capabilities, policies and practices of the HR profession and are the foundation for the National Knowledge Exam (NKE) and the National Professional Practice Assessment.

The two-year review included focus groups comprised of HR practitioners and business people, as well as surveys of CHRP holders.

"We asked them to identify what has changed, what should be changed, what should be included and what they thought about where the profession was going," said Palmer.

The focus groups felt most of the capabilities were still important and relevant, but in some cases the wording needed to change, said Cheryl Lamerson, manager of professional standards at the CCHRA.

"Oftentimes the wording reflected a change in the emphasis. The terminology was much more strategic than it had previously been. I think that reflects that HR is seen as being more strategic than ever before," she said.

For example, the wording of one capability was changed in essence from "calculate the pension information" to "calculates and advises the senior staff," said Lamerson.

The review also determined there should be seven broad functional dimensions instead of the current eight:

- professional practice in human resources;
- organizational effectiveness;
- staffing;
- employee and labour relations;
- total compensation;
- organizational learning, development and training; and
- workplace health and safety.

The former eighth dimension, human resources information management, was collapsed into the professional practice in human resources dimension because it's a tool, rather than an HR discipline, said Palmer.

The 203 RPCs under the dimensions were rewritten for clarity, refocused and condensed into 187.

Within the area of health and safety, changes to the RPCs reflected the strategic focus this area has taken on in recent years, said Palmer. Also, the requirements in organizational learning and development were broadened to reflect the increased diversity of tools and knowledge available, she said.

Under the professional practice dimension, there's more of a focus on HR's strategic contribution to an organization's success, as well as planning and implementing HR strategies, measuring strategic organizational results and business acumen, said Palmer.

"There is a recognition now that an effective HR practitioner needs to also be an effective business partner," she said.

In the next few months, the CCHRA will be communicating the new RPCs to universities, colleges and the providers of exam study guides and preparation courses, said Palmer, to ensure candidates are well versed on the new capabilities in time for the October 2008 NKE exam.

The CCHRA will routinely review the RPCs every five years to ensure they are relevant for HR professionals, said Palmer.

"The profession of HR is changing, it continues to evolve and we want to make sure that the body of knowledge that HR people need reflects those changes," she said.

In the next review, which will start in about three years, the changes will probably go even further because HR practitioners are really coming into their own, said Palmer.