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Evolving Role of HR Function Leads to Record Number of Certified Professionals

International expansion, new interest among Fortune 500 companies are other indicators

National Publication Ranks HR Profession the #4 "Best Job in America"

Alexandria, Va. – Both driving and benefiting from the trend toward greater strategic integration of the human resource department into corporate decision making, the Human Resource Certification Institute (HRCI) has announced an unprecedented period of growth and activity. HRCI, the world's largest HR credentialing body, expects an estimated 24,000 professionals to seek certification worldwide in 2006.

"What more and more companies are beginning to understand is that when you make someone responsible for identifying mission critical personnel, that person instantly becomes mission critical as well," said R. Gregory Green, Chairman of the Board for HRCI. "Across the board employers – be they in the government, nonprofit or private sectors – are coming to equate certification in the HR department with knowledge, excellence, efficiency and performance that contributes to the bottom line."

During the past decade, the number of human resource professionals taking HRCI's certification examinations each year has more than doubled to 18,500 in 2005 from 7,700 just ten years earlier. Today, more than 80,000 professionals hold a PHR, SPHR or GPHR certification, which – along with passage of a rigorous exam – also requires continuing education or retesting every three years.

Meeting Professional Demand

As the human resources profession continues to evolve, HR professionals are taking on broader and more strategic responsibilities within their organizations. As such, tens of thousands of HR practitioners are turning to professional certification as a way to demonstrate to themselves and their employer that they've mastered a core set of HR principles vital to staying up to date on issues and trends affecting organizations worldwide. Certified HR professionals regularly deal with a broad range of issues including employee development and recruitment, planning for an aging workforce, developing strategic staffing plans for corporate mergers, and dealing with the rising cost of healthcare, driving the HR department to become the vital component of a thriving and successful business operation.

"I have found that certified HR professionals have a better grasp of the theoretical and practical demands of our work," said Isaac Dixon, SPHR, Vice President, Human Resources, Unitus

Community Credit Union. Additionally, certified professionals “seem to possess a higher level of motivation to continue to learn once on the job.”

As HR departments continue to command a greater, more proactive and strategic role in ensuring business success, the value of a professional certification is gaining widespread acceptance in organizations large and small. Indeed, the demand is so great that HRCI has expanded its offerings. HRCI initially offered two professional certifications: the Professional in Human Resources (PHR[®]) and the Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR[®]). In 2004, responding to a growing need to offer a certification that helps HR practitioners successfully and effectively operate in a global marketplace, HRCI introduced the Global Professional in Human Resources (GPHR[™]). During that first year, more than 270 professionals took the GPHR examination. The following year, that figure increased by nearly 40 percent. In addition to the GPHR certification, HRCI is considering other certifications to address growing needs within the HR profession.

“This dramatic increase in the number of professionals interested in HR certification is emblematic of the changing nature of the role HR professionals are playing within their organizations,” said Cornelia Springer, CAE, Executive Director of HRCI. “HR professionals are recognizing the value – particularly the strategic value that they bring to their employers – of demonstrating their mastery of key HR principles that will assist them in their day-to-day work life.”

Top Companies, Institutions Rely on Certified HR Staff

Today, more and more organizations are staffing their HR departments with certified professionals. The top organizations, by number of HRCI certified employees, are a veritable *Who’s Who* among business and government agencies, including:

1. Automatic Data Processing
2. The Boeing Company
3. AT&T
4. United States Postal Service
5. State Farm Insurance

“From *Fortune* 500 companies to small business owners and nonprofit organizations, employers recognize the critical role that HR plays in achieving system-wide goals and objectives,” said Green. “The hiring decisions that HR departments facilitate along with the employee development and retention issues they handle are key components to turning business plans into business success.”

These are also key reasons why *Money Magazine* and Salary.com list Human Resource Manager as #4 in its Best Jobs in America rankings. According to the publication, HR managers “are considered strategic planners” and are “expected to design employee programs that also benefit the bottom line.” “This is further indication of the important role that the HR function should play in any organization,” said Springer.

International Interest

And, it’s not just U.S. companies that are seeing the value of certification. HRCI was recently part of a delegation that traveled to China to learn about and share HR practices with University professors, Chinese business leaders and government officials. “The global business marketplace has opened many doors to new opportunities for HR professionals,” said Springer. “At the same time, HR professionals are opening the doors for international companies. We believe it’s really

telling that in a society working to build a business climate that encourages free enterprise, adheres to the rule of law and works in an environment of transparency, one of the first things being looked at is raising the level of professionalism of the HR sector.”

In addition to having certified practitioners in all 50 states, HRCI has certified professionals in more than 60 countries around the world.

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HRCI is an independent, internationally recognized certifying body for the HR profession. Established in 1976, HRCI awards certifications to professionals who meet minimum eligibility standards and pass a rigorous examination. HRCI testing requires professionals to demonstrate their expertise in both the underlying principles of HR practice and the real-world application of those principles. To remain certified, individuals must fulfill continuing education requirements or demonstrate their current knowledge of the profession through retesting. HRCI is an affiliate of the Society for Human Resource Management.