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Annette Snyder, SPHR-CA and GPHR,
Director of Human Resources, Tiny Prints

CALIFORNIA CERTIFICATION HELPED FAST-TRACK MY CAREER PATH...

In this interview, Annette Snyder, SPHR-CA and GPHR, director of human resources, Tiny Prints, and president elect of Northern California Human Resources Association (NCHRA), shares her thoughts on how her California certification (SPHR-CA) affected her human resource (HR) career progression and personal development.

HOW MANY YEARS HAVE YOU BEEN IN THE HR INDUSTRY?

I have been in the HR industry for 19 years. But I didn’t start my career in HR. I started in the finance and accounting field. It was during that time that I was assigned HR duties, and the more I got into it, it became clear that HR was my passion—and still is.

WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO PURSUE YOUR FIRST HR CERTIFICATION?

I strongly believe that certification is the validation of the mastery of HR knowledge and experience. Since my education was in finance and accounting, I needed a way to demonstrate that I was an HR subject matter expert. So in 1999, I got my Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR) certification. In 2005, because I had international HR responsibilities, I went on to obtain the Global Professional in Human Resources (GPHR) certification to demonstrate my expertise in the global HR field. Then, when the California certification became available in 2007, I was quite keen to obtain it since I was practicing HR in California. HR certification was the most respected and recognized way to show organizational leaders and my peers that I know HR and am dedicated to the HR profession.

HOW HAS YOUR CALIFORNIA CERTIFICATION HELPED YOUR CAREER?

Soon after I added the California certification to my SPHR credential, doors began to open. Employers truly look upon my HR credentials as a validation of knowledge and experience. There are three levels of benefits that I have come to realize with HR certification. On a personal level, it facilitates my professional growth and pushes me to improve continuously. Professionally, it sets me apart from the rest of HR professionals and enables me to gain respect within the HR industry. Finally, the organizations that I have worked with benefit because I have essential HR knowledge to guide them through legal compliance issues and the HR department is more capable in meeting and driving the strategic objectives of the organization. Business leaders look for the California certification as validation of one’s expertise in California employment law. Recently I changed jobs, and in the middle of this economic downturn, I had four job offers to choose from. I attribute this to my certifications, particularly my California certification.

HOW IMPORTANT DO YOU THINK IT IS FOR HR PROFESSIONALS PRACTICING IN CALIFORNIA TO HOLD A CALIFORNIA CERTIFICATION?

California HR laws and practices are singularly differentiated from federal HR laws, and by offering a state-specific certification for California, the HR Certification Institute acknowledges these differences. Getting the California certification demonstrates the HR professional’s ability to manage the differences between California and federal HR laws. For HR professionals practicing in California, obtaining the certification strongly communicates their drive to stay ahead of the ever-changing HR laws and regulations.

WHAT IS YOUR ADVICE FOR HR PROFESSIONALS IN THIS CHALLENGING ECONOMIC CLIMATE?

Invest in yourself, your employability and professional development through your HR certifications. Consider how you can differentiate yourself. There are more than 170,000 HR professionals in California, but only an estimated 8,000 are certified and less than 400 currently hold the California certification. Adding these letters behind your name will help you stand out from those around you. These certifications can open doors of career opportunities, as you see from my experience. Consider the HR certification possibility.