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Dear Certified Colleague,

As Chair of the Board of Directors of the HR Certification Institute for 2011 and 2012, I would like to take a few moments to reflect on your accomplishment of achieving HR certification. I want to congratulate you and offer special recognition to those of you who have obtained more than one of our certifications and the many of you who have since recertified. Certification is testament to your commitment to the field of HR, your constituents and yourself as a professional.

I am a GPHR, having sat for the inaugural examination in 2004. While I am delighted to be a member of that first class of successful candidates, I am most proud to include these four letters among my credentials, which mean so much to the colleagues I work with and the clients I serve every day. These people are very important to me, so it is rewarding that I have a professional HR certification that is important to them. I hope you derive the same sense of fulfillment from your certification as I do, whether it be Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR®), Professional in Human Resources (PHR®), California Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR-CA®), California Professional in Human Resources (PHR-CA®) or Global Professional in Human Resources (GPHR®).

At the same time, certification is part of something bigger than oneself. The HR profession is strong, and it is continually becoming stronger, in large part because of the rigor of the certification process. The profession is enhanced by people who have demonstrated mastery of the bodies of knowledge, who commit themselves to the periodic affirmation of their knowledge through recertification and who comport themselves with the confidence that successful certification inspires.

We all have the opportunity to work with very accomplished HR professionals. Whenever you observe their extraordinary contribution to the business and the people who make it successful, take a moment to notice if they are certified by the Institute. They are the professionals who are likely to be doing great things in their HR careers, as are you.

Again, thank you for your commitment to HR certification. You got certified, and it got noticed.

Gardiner Hempel Jr., CPA, GPHR
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HR Certification Institute Board Chair
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Here are many paths to human resources, as Kamal Aderibigbe, 35, can attest. Holding a university degree in textile technology, Aderibigbe will be the first to tell you he had no idea he would end up in human resources. In fact, he considered a career as a university professor where he could teach students about the intricacies of making fabrics.

It wasn’t until after Aderibigbe won a best student award at his Nigerian university that his own pathway became clear. The award paved the way for an internship with KPMG Professional Services (formerly Andersen Consulting), a consulting firm that taught him about recruiting and training employees. Once there, he realized that he was doing human resources work and, what’s more, he realized he really loved it.

As Aderibigbe began advancing in his HR career, the nature of his work became more global. After a decade working with colleagues from North America, Asia, Europe, South America and Africa, he found that each nationality had its own unique culture and local laws, although human resources practices are common throughout the world. So Aderibigbe realized that it was paramount to learn about the science behind HR and supplement his knowledge through professional certifications.

“Culture is such a big piece of global HR,” Aderibigbe says. The Global Professional in Human Resources (GPHR®) certification provided Aderibigbe with a greater understanding.
of how to engage and understand other cultures, he says.
Certification helps Aderibigbe speak more comfortably about
other cultures so he can feel more confident and better
challenge ideas that are globally relevant.

In Lagos, Nigeria, where Aderibigbe currently works, he has
found that developing the next generation of leaders is becoming
essential.

For the past five years, Aderibigbe has worked for British
American Tobacco, a multi-national company. After receiving
a promotion, he is now the head of talent management for the
company's West African region.

But finding the right talent remains the biggest challenge for
HR professionals in Nigeria, he says.

“Companies are pinning Africa as their growth market,” he
says. “They will need local talent to lead the business, and our
biggest challenge is finding the right local talent for senior-level
roles.”

Companies like British American Tobacco are beginning to
address the talent challenge by creating leadership development
programs, which recruit and train top university graduates so
they can fill senior-level roles over the next 8 to 10 years. So far

Companies need local talent to lead the business, and our biggest
challenge is finding the right local talent for senior-level roles.

the firm’s leadership development program has a talent retention
rate of 80 percent.

“HRCI is pioneering standards,” he says. “We need a
standardization of practices here that will provide all HR
professionals with the same skill set and help achieve our
strategic objectives.”
We love great HR stories. Stories of leadership, innovation and promotion brought about by your commitment to the profession and HR certification.

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A Healthy Dose of HR

Managing HR in the healthcare industry poses unique challenges when it comes to staffing and client satisfaction.

Certified: What sets your industry apart in terms of HR?
Shareem Kilkenny: The healthcare industry is unique for two main reasons: We are in the business of healing, and we usually have much greater staffing shortages than most other industries. Employee engagement by HR personnel has a significant impact on employee performance, which in turn impacts patient satisfaction. As an HR professional, I strongly believe that it is my duty to lead engagement efforts through recognition and rewards, recruitment, leadership development and compensation programs. Even in times of high unemployment, the healthcare industry continues to be faced with chronic staffing shortages and retention issues. Therefore, in addition to performing our regular daily functions, it is imperative that we are forward-thinking in our decision making and constantly seeking to develop creative means of retaining employees to avoid staffing shortages.

C: What are the current/future challenges you see for HR professionals who work in the healthcare industry?
SK: Healthcare is rapidly changing. The constant changes and complexities of healthcare present challenges. The most significant change is that patient satisfaction scores will soon determine Medicare reimbursement. HR will be at the forefront of improving the quality of services and patient satisfaction by embarking on even more rigorous talent searches. The other major challenge is the rapidly expanding 65-and-older age group. This group has traditionally required a greater proportion of health services; therefore the industry will likely be challenged to meet the growing needs of this population. Dealing with both of these challenges will require HR professionals to become more engaged and aware of national population trends and changes to medical schools’ curricula as it affects how we recruit and retain qualified staff.

C: Does certification help you in your job/field? How so?
SK: The knowledge I have gained from pursuing my Professional in Human Resources (PHR®) has been extremely valuable in my role. My PHR certification has provided me with a well-rounded HR knowledge base that helps me think through situations from a broad perspective. The other benefit of holding a certification is the recertification requirements. Though this can be a challenge, it holds me accountable to continue to build upon my knowledge and continue to grow as a human resources professional. I have encouraged my fellow co-workers to pursue their certification and shared the rewards and benefits of being certified.

Shareem Kilkenny, PHR, has been in the human resources field for more than nine years. She has been in several industries, including the airline industry, media, government contracting and, most recently, healthcare, which she is passionate about. She holds a master’s degree in Human Resources Administration and earned her PHR designation in 2011. She is a member of the Society for Human Resource Management, local SHRM chapter ACHRA (Albemarle Charlottesville Human Resources Association) and VaSHHRA (Virginia Society for Healthcare Human Resources Administration). She currently serves as co-lead of the diversity special interest group for ACHRA.
The changing world of museums and arts centers—with tighter budgets and greater technology influence—requires an artful shift in HR practices.

*By Archana Mehta*
When you think of art, what do you think of? You probably think of an art piece or a favorite art gallery—probably not a “virtual” art gallery that you can access right from the comfort of your living room, like Google’s Art Project.

Indeed, art museums are rapidly changing, prompting senior human resources officials to quickly adapt with them.

“As our society changes and evolves, museums must follow,” says Elizabeth Detels, SPHR, manager of human resources at the Seattle Art Museum. “They must reflect the communities they serve.”

HR professionals across the country are experiencing a wave of changes at their museums, whether it’s a new interactive Gauguin exhibit in Seattle, the ability for visitors to use their smartphones to learn more about pieces of art in Denver’s museum or Saint Louis’ aggressive new social media push to interact with a wired audience.

For HR managers, the goal is to attract and train employees who can adapt and excel in a changing environment at a time of enormous financial constraints for museums from coast to coast.

“Money is the biggest hurdle for us,” says Nancy Martin, SPHR, HR director at Saint Louis Art Museum, which is free for all visitors. “But because we also rely so heavily on membership and donations, we are constantly having to manage our controllable costs, like benefits, and trying to do more with less.”

Linda Orr, SPHR, the human resources director at Denver Art Museum, can relate to the challenges facing the Saint Louis museum. Addressing the needs of hundreds of full-time
staff—including payroll and benefits—can be daunting when money is one of the biggest challenges facing the arts today. So museums are looking to younger audiences as a way to expand their reach, develop lifelong patrons and grow their revenues. This shift to engaging younger audiences has a significant impact on HR practices.

“The art education piece is incredibly important,” Orr says. “If we don’t expose young people to art at an early age, they’re less likely to be donors and patrons in the future. In addition, lack of funding affects HR specifically as it has an effect on staffing levels.”

With money tight all around, museums are getting creative—to the benefit of both their communities and their workforces. At the Seattle museum, which relies on earned revenue through memberships and ticket sales plus contributions to keep its doors open, Detels says that the 250-person full- and part-time staff are trying “to look at things upside down and in a different way” in order to evolve with the times.

“From an HR perspective, what that means for me is that all [staff members’ ideas] are heard, no matter how unusual or impossible it might sound,” Detels says. “And this has real implications on how we work together.”

Those discussions influence Detels’ decisions on hiring, staffing, training and retaining personnel.

“If we’re reflecting on how museums evolve in a changing world, then that has direct implications on who we hire, how we organize our meetings, how we organize our organizational chart in order to get the best ideas from the most diverse sources to explore and perhaps implement,” says Detels, who began her career in general management at the La Jolla Playhouse in California.

But managing a diversity of employees, ranging from curators and conservators to full-time and part-time staff, introduces its own challenges because there’s a constant need to find the right personnel for a variety of positions and create a collegial workplace.

“There is quite a dichotomy,” says Orr, the Denver HR director, who has been working in the HR field for 13 years. “It’s necessary to create an environment that can bring everyone together.”

On the other hand, working in a museum environment has its benefits. Employees believe in the work of the museum and in the work that they do. Working in such a mission-driven environment creates a collegial, friendly workplace, HR managers say.

“Because we have a national reputation for excellence, and we already have talented
professionals currently working at our museum, talent acquisition at many levels is easier,” says Martin, the Saint Louis director, whose love of St. Louis brought her to the museum a year and a half ago. “People want to work here.”

In Denver, the feeling is the same. “Working at an art museum is very much like working in academia,” says Orr. “We have highly educated and highly talented staff who love their work and are very passionate about art.”

Finding young talent remains a top priority for museums, so internship programs are critical to their long-term success, even as museums rely heavily on the expertise of their veteran employees.

“We have considerable tenure at the museum; some staff members have been around for 35-40 years,” Detels says. “The experience and more traditional viewpoints of museum-going are highly valued. However, bringing in younger talent helps us continue to keep up with what’s going on outside the museum. We’re really benefitting from the best of both worlds.”

Martin adds, “Our interns and research assistants add a nice complement to our tenured staff. They help us stay on the cutting-edge of where art museums are going.”

HR professionals say that at times tension can arise because of the different viewpoints. But if successfully managed, the contrasting perspectives make for a better experience for the museum-goer, they say.

Indeed, museums are doing whatever they can to stay on top of the latest technological and cultural shifts.

It helps to have a passionate, forward-thinking board of directors who sees the value in being progressive, while also remaining true to the more traditional museum school of thought. “How do we, as a museum, commit to our mission while being responsible?” Detels asks. “The board is very much involved and looks to our senior leadership and partners with HR to deliver on that greater directive.”

For instance, Seattle Art Museum recently changed its policy regarding photography. The museum used to prohibit photographs in its art galleries. But with social media and digital cameras, camera phones and tablets becoming more popular and accessible, the museum in March 2010 decided to change its policies and allow photography in certain galleries.

This allows friends and followers of museum-goers to witness some of Seattle’s most stunning art exhibits through social media.

“We think this policy change makes for a stronger museum-going experience,” Detels says. “These photos now show up on Facebook, tied to Seattle Art Museum. It’s a different way of museum-going that reflects our ever-changing world.”

Linda D. Orr, SPHR
Human Resources Director
Denver Art Museum
Linda Orr has over 16 years of experience in generalist and management roles consisting of an eclectic variety of positions and industries. After serving most of her professional life as a teacher in San Diego, Orr decided to change careers and apply her expertise to the HR profession, beginning with a position at St. Vincent de Paul Village, a large non-profit social services organization in San Diego.
Denver Art Museum has taken some different steps for the wired museum visitor. The museum has created a new mobile application called “DAM_SCOUT,” which allows museum-goers to uncover content and learn about exhibitions by scanning Quick Reference (QR) codes. The QR codes are set up like barcodes, which allow various types of data to be encoded.

By scanning the codes from their smartphones, enthusiasts can access a multitude of information — they can listen to artists, museum experts and even comedians speak about the art they are witnessing before their eyes, and then share that content on Facebook and Twitter.

Similarly, part of a Gauguin exhibit currently on display at the Seattle Art Museum has an online, interactive component. Visitors can click on an interactive map to learn about Gauguin’s influence around the world.

Visitors can watch YouTube videos from curators, view images of Gauguin’s art and read content on Gauguin’s life. This creates a comprehensive experience for museum-goers and provides them with the ability to continue their art experience after they leave the museum.

All of these enhancements led to an aggressive effort by Seattle Art Museum to engage with outside audiences through social media. Detels says that the HR department encourages employees to be active on the museum’s Facebook page and Twitter feed. They encourage employees to comment on posts and photos and to repost articles.

“It’s a different way of working,” she says. “And from my HR office, we’re going to see more internal communications with employees on a social media platform.”

Martin says embracing technology can be a hurdle for some within the museum. However, the past year has seen the Saint Louis Museum begin to embrace social media and use Facebook, Twitter and Flickr to connect with its audience and fans.

“There is so much potential for us using social media and reaching new audiences, getting them in the door and then providing them with a rich experience and then interacting with them in the mediums they use,” Martin says. “The more engagement we have, the more likely museum-goers will buy memberships, which support the museum, and stay committed to the arts.”

While museums must take advantage of technology, money shortages can place a burden on how quickly museums can evolve.

Nancy Martin, SPHR
Human Resources Director
Saint Louis Art Museum

Nancy Martin brings over 15 years of successful experience in human resources, serving in industries including hospitality, higher education, technology, business services/consulting and the arts. Martin earned a bachelor of arts degree in Business Administration from Columbia College, and a master of science in Human Resources Management from Lindenwood University. She is a certified Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR®). Currently, Martin serves as the HR director for the Saint Louis Art Museum. She is active with the Human Resource Management Association of Greater St. Louis as well as the Society for Human Resource Management.
“Technology is a positive thing, but when money is limited, it’s somewhat of a burden,” Martin says. “Our building was built in the early 1900s. There is no easy way to retro-fit our building with wires, etc.”

Employees at the museums have to learn the best ways to attract younger audiences — going beyond social media.

Indeed, Seattle Art Museum, along with Denver Art Museum and Saint Louis Art Museum also do a lot of outreach in their communities to bring art to the people.

“We work with the local YWCA to expose young people to what it’s like to work at a museum,” says Detels. In addition, working with schools is also critical to continue to keep art at the forefront. Each museum has an education division that works with local schools and brings student groups to the museum to expose them to art.

With money shortages all around, the arts are one of the first things to be cut out of school budgets.

“We have to create the excitement for art at an early age,” Orr says. “We have to expose them to art.”

One way Detels is addressing the philosophy of “do more with less” with her HR peers in Seattle is through greater collaboration and sharing of best practices with local art organizations. “Why should all 15 organizations create harassment training? Why not have one of us create that specific training and another organization create a management training, and then we’ll swap?”

All of this amounts to a growing challenge for museums’ efforts to adapt — and HR managers’ efforts to address the changes and ensure employees are ready to embrace new ideas.

“I walk by the Seattle Symphony Orchestra on my way to work,” Detels says. “The symphony is bringing in non-classical musicians. The symphony is having to figure out how to stay relevant, and they are having to respond to their audience and change in the same way we do.”
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Compensation and classification can be complicated for the HR professional at colleges and universities.

Vicki West, SPHR, has more than 20 years’ experience in higher education HR, as well as experience in HR management in retail and manufacturing. West focuses on collaboration, with the goal of ensuring exacting accuracy in compensation matters. For her, working in compensation and classification is a delightful balance of attention to detail and interaction with others, and she finds that analysis of compensation issues from more than one perspective is a valuable practice.

Certified: What sets your industry apart in terms of HR?

Vicki West: In higher education, one finds different types of employees based on the type of institution. Ivy League institutions, state universities, research universities, medical or other specialty universities and colleges, liberal arts colleges, private colleges and large and small community colleges all teach at the post-secondary level. Full-time faculty work on a 9-month, 10½-month, 11-month or 12-month basis, while part-time or adjunct faculty work on a semester basis. Other employees include administrators and staff, who work on an annual basis.

In many community college geographic districts, several smaller colleges have joined together to form a district. Each college has its own administration, classification structure and/or wage rates. Austin Community College (ACC) District, with more than 45,000 students, is different; we are structured on the one-college concept, with eight campus locations in the district, instead of individual colleges. We have one administration, one classification/compensation structure and one central HR department to service the eight-county district.

In addition, our pay structure is complicated. For example, several years ago, the administration committed to paying the full-time faculty among the top three market rates for community college faculty in the State of Texas. Soon the adjunct faculty wanted to be paid similarly, since they teach the same courses as full-time faculty. The differences in pay scales, work load, method of payment (annual salaries versus credit hour rates) and new hire placement criteria prevented this. In the past, we followed a standard practice in higher education: Adjunct credit hour rates were not placed until they taught a specific number of semesters, while
the salaries of all other employees were placed upon hire. HR conducted analysis of full-time and part-time teaching duties and converted annual salaries to a credit hour rate. We created a way to pay adjunct faculty at-market, based on a ratio to the full-time faculty market rates. We did it in a way that is revenue neutral over time, with annual increases based proportional to the number of credits taught. We now place the credit hour rates of the new adjunct faculty at the time of hire.

C: What are the current and future challenges for HR in colleges and universities?

VW: Diminishing state funding is a major current and future challenge for HR professionals throughout academia. Many institutions have lost investments in the stock market. Many states have reduced or eliminated funding for higher education in recent years. Funding for ACC comes from the state, property tax base and tuition. With the state facing budget challenges, funding is diminishing each year, and the property tax base is dropping as houses move into foreclosure and business units go unrented. A property tax increase would have to be passed by the voters whom it would impact.

Fewer or no annual increases, possible layoffs, academic program cuts, hiring fewer full-time faculty and more adjunct faculty are some of the challenges institutions of higher education now face on a national basis. Specifically to compensation, paying all faculty and staff at-market is a challenge in these hard economic times. Employee morale and engagement may be affected. Unlike the private sector, public institutions do not have the special funding to offer perks and incentives. Our biggest incentive is relative job security. While we want to do right by our employees, we have to be good stewards of our funding. At ACC, HR is developing a career path program. There is a lot of employee interest in it, as it is seen as a way to possibly earn a higher salary.

At ACC, the annual budget had included a 4 percent increase each year. Over the last three years, that has been reduced to no increase one year and a 2 percent increase for two years. We have not had any layoffs, and employees are glad to still have a job, so turnover is still low. In compensation, we have had to modify our hiring process to prevent new hires from out-pacing current employees.

C: How does certification help in compensation?

VW: My Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR®) certification lends a perceived layer of professionalism and expertise to my position as manager in Compensation/Classification. We look strategically at the structure of the institution from time to time, and the body of knowledge gained from the certification helps me look at this from different perspectives.

The certification also is an indication that I have put time and effort into obtaining and maintaining it. As a hiring supervisor, I see certification as an indicator that the applicant considers HR a serious career choice. The HRCI certification reflects a commitment to learning and maintaining a body of knowledge that is useful on many levels of human resources.

As a hiring supervisor, I see certification as an indicator that the applicant considers HR a serious career choice.
Be Our Guest

The unique challenges of managing HR in the hospitality industry mean going the extra mile to keep employees just as satisfied as the customers.

Clara Blitch, PHR, has enjoyed nearly 11 years in human resources, in many different roles. Her experience ranges from the hospitality industry to biotechnology, then healthcare before returning to hospitality in 2011 as a director of human resources. She holds a bachelor’s degree in Marketing, which she earned after entering the HR field, because she realized the importance of branding and selling an organization to potential candidates as well as marketing changes and retention to current employees. She has held her PHR designation since 2005 and has been a Certified Strength Coach through the Gallup Organization since 2005. She is passionate about wellness and has a blog on that topic at www.changemyblueprint.blogspot.com.

Certified: What sets your industry apart in terms of HR?
Clara Blitch: The hospitality industry has a unique set of challenges. From the HR perspective, there are countless details that a very small group of HR associates are available to handle. While this is status quo in HR in general (Can I get an “amen”?), I believe hospitality has an even leaner staff. (For the record, I have worked in HR in biotechnology and healthcare as well.) At my company, we have 70 properties spread out over the southeast United States, with each property employing between 18 and 45 associates. The general manager (GM) is the only on-site HR representation at each location. This can prove challenging, as he or she is also essentially the CEO of that property and pulled in as many directions as you can imagine. HR is not the GMs’ only focus, so we HR folks sometimes feel like sheepdogs, circling the herds and nipping at their heels when necessary, blocking entrance to the roads that lead to nowhere…keeping in mind we can only be in one field at a time! Hospitality is customer focused, and we live in a world of litigious customers, where everyone wants something for free — and with the right amount of pressure, they can get that, which in turn hurts the business, the bottom line and the associates. Hospitality companies also see a large number of Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) claims, and it is challenging to develop responses to these when you are not working at the property day to day.

C: What are the current and future challenges you see for HR professionals who work in hospitality or with large numbers of employees who are off-site?
CB: One of our current challenges is that we cannot employ many full-time workers on the line level, because our expenses are all tied to costs per occupied room; therefore our associates may have 40 hours one week and 16 the next, if occupancy is down. This, coupled with having many associates making just above minimum wage, equals higher than average turnover. We all know turnover costs money, and this is likely the biggest challenge we face now and will continue to face: As soon as we have someone trained, they are gone. Add to those challenges the rising costs of healthcare and the potential changes in healthcare legislation, and we have huge concerns over how our industry will be affected financially and how that will continue to affect our high turnover numbers.

HR professionals who work in hospitality have to be creative when it comes to reaching all of their field managers. We use webinars, a weekly “Headliner” email and other methods of communication to ensure we get information out to the masses. We also answer the same question multiple times. I believe all HR professionals deal with distracted managers. It’s nothing new, but we choose to work through it by over-communicating pertinent information to be sure everyone has an opportunity to “get it.” At the end of the day, while holding GMs at the
properties accountable is paramount, treating them like “customers” is also hugely important. So we try to institute policies and procedures that make sense and will not hinder their day-to-day work. To accomplish this, we established an advisory council made up of these GMs, so we can run policy or procedure changes and ideas by the people who would have to implement at the property and who understand their potential effects. We do all of this realizing that without them, there would be no need for us!

C: What do you see as a unique issue or challenge to companies with employees who work in multiple locations or who telecommute?

CB: Multiple locations are certainly a challenge in our industry, as it is for the HR field overall. When your phone rings, the manager on the other end may not seem to realize there are 70 other managers who are or could be calling you. Sometimes it might feel like there is no way to keep your head above water. Even traveling 100 percent of the time, one person cannot support that many locations. Our challenge is to divide and conquer in our regions, work closely with the regional directors to have them handle as many of the property-level HR issues as they can and call in the HR team when absolutely necessary. It is challenging to make sure things as simple as updating labor law posters is happening at each location. Our creative solution in this case was to affix a neon sticker to each poster to ensure we can recognize it as the most up-to-date poster. Since we cannot visit all of the properties ourselves, we asked the GM to email us a picture of the new poster once it is hung at their property. Also, our regional directors now know which dot to look for to be sure the proper poster is being displayed when they visit their properties.

Another challenge is dealing with unemployment claims, including responding to requests for information, hearing notices and keeping up with cases. With so many locations, originally we had unemployment and hearing notices being mailed all over the place. We now have these documents all come through the corporate office, and we have one associate respond to and coordinate all of the responses, hearings, etc. Launching a file organization system at the property level has greatly assisted in having the right information at our fingertips to do the responses in a timely fashion. Again, getting creative and thinking outside of the box — because we have 70 boxes!

C: How does certification help you in your job within the hospitality industry?

CB: I have proudly held my Professional in Human Resources (PHR®) certification since 2005. I believe being a certified HR professional gives the distinction and notice to everyone that we know our stuff and can be trusted to give sound advice on HR issues. (**Note - do not confuse “certified” with “certifiable,” although being in HR that could fit as well!) In the past decade I have had to seek employment more than once, and for any advanced HR position I’ve found, most of the time an HRCI certification is requested or preferred. I like being in the preferred category. The certification is what really led me to be more involved in my local SHRM chapter as well, which has caused me to seek out international employment law webinars, seminars and courses.

The recertification requirements truly help you stay on top of the ever-changing laws. Everyone should get certified!
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Certified for Life

Initial certification is an important step to advancing in the human resources profession, but ongoing recertification is the key to a long-lived and successful career in the field.

By Nona Chigewe

What is recertification?
Recertification is the actual process that individuals engage in to renew the certification they hold from the HR Certification Institute. Achieving a certification from the HR Certification Institute is not a “one and done” type of activity. To maintain certification, you must be prepared to continue to learn, grow and achieve in the HR profession.

Why is recertification valuable?
Recertification holds you to a high standard of commitment to staying current in the field of HR and abreast of changes to its bodies of knowledge. It validates that your knowledge and experience are current in an ever-changing environment. It shows that you are building upon your knowledge, growing as a professional and increasing your experience every day. You are making a bold statement about your commitment to HR and to education with recertification: Not only were you able to do the job when you became certified, but you are just as knowledgeable and credible at doing your job today, despite changes to the professional landscape. This validation of current experience and knowledge is what differentiates a certified HR professional from one who holds only a degree or certificate.

Garnering support for recertification from employers
Having your company or organizational leaders on board with your recertification process is important, as it helps to define the credibility and significance of your HR credentials. Clarifying the recertification concept to the leaders of your organization aids in differentiating you from peers who are not certified, which can lead to bigger raises and better promotions.

Along with career growth, receiving financial support for engaging in recertification activities from your organization comes more easily. Here’s how to help your employer see the value in the recertification process, which will help lead to increased organizational support across the board.

Get recertified
One major obstacle to recertifying your HR certification that you can eliminate right away is financial concerns. The inability to obtain financial aid should not stop you from maintaining your current credentials. There is no need to break the bank when recertifying. There are a great number of activities that you can engage in for free as an HR professional to complete your recertification.

Get credits while you work
Let’s begin with your current job. Most of us spend 10 hours a day, five days a week at work. We are engaged in project after project. Some of these we routinely do as a part of our everyday job description; others we have begun to tackle for the first time in our careers. Occasionally, the boss announces a new initiative for the company and defines your role. This role is one that you have never performed before and makes you a little nervous, but you know that if you can pull it off successfully it can only mean career growth.

This is the perfect recertification activity. The HR Certification Institute awards up to 20 credit hours per recertification cycle for on-the-job activities. Now, if this doesn’t happen to you in your position, ask for it. There is always something happening in every office that is new for an organization. Find out how you can become involved in these types of projects and where you might be able to contribute. Stretch yourself and grow as a professional, while taking care of 20 credit hours to go towards your recertification.

Forty more credits to go…

Blogging for credits
We can agree that technology has taken over every aspect of our lives in the past 10 years. One area of technology we cannot run away from is virtual communication and engagement. The number of LinkedIn and Facebook memberships keeps growing and growing. Tweets just keep on coming. Let’s be honest here: Who doesn’t have a blog? There are a hundreds of HR blogs that you can contribute to as an HR professional (or you can even start one of your own).

You know the bodies of knowledge for the Professional in Human Resources (PHR®), Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR®), Global Professional in Human Resources (GPHR®) and the California certifications (PHR-CA® & SPHR-CA®), right? Writing and publishing a fact-based post of 700 words or more based on one of these bodies of knowledge will provide you with .5 credit hours per post. You can earn up to two credit hours per year, leading to six credit hours per recertification cycle.

This activity falls under the “Leadership” category of your recertification application. You can earn a maximum of 10 credit hours per recertification cycle in this category. This means there are still four more Leadership credits to be earned. Some Leadership activities you may want to consider are mentoring (five credit hours per year), holding an officer position on a board (five credit hours per year), volunteering with the Institute (up to 10 credit hours per recertification cycle) and serving on a peer review board for a national HR-related magazine or publication (three credit hours per year). Participating in any other Leadership...
category activities will help you earn the remaining four credit hours needed to meet the category maximum.

Now you have only 30 credits to earn…

*Watch a webinar*

Webcasts represent another advancement in technology from which we all can benefit. We can learn, ask questions and connect with a subject matter expert, all from our desktops, laptops or tablets. This means that you can participate in webcast sessions from anywhere. Many organizations offer webcasts for free or at little cost to participants. I can’t remember the last time I paid for a webcast I attended. Probably never! You can earn up to 20 credit hours per recertification cycle for attending relevant HR-related webcasts.

That leaves you with 10 more credit hours to complete your recertification…

*More training options*

Where else can you earn credit hours? Have you had to attend any in-house training that was related to HR? There is no max on the number of credits hours you can earn for attending formal on-the-job training. Just be sure that training is HR related, that it has

“Recertification is another key to success for HR professionals and the Institute,” says Rose Ann Javorek Kay, SPHR, GPHR. “The process of certification and recertification shows that HR professionals are exposed to the breadth of HR knowledge, even if they are specialists in one area.”
set learning objectives, the instructor has expertise on the topic presented and it is the first time you have attended.

Let’s not forget if you are the actual instructor of this in-house training or any other HR-related course. For each recertification cycle, you can earn up to 20 credit hours for teaching an HR subject matter for the first time. Credit hours are awarded on an hour-per-hour basis. Preparation of the course material is even taken into consideration. For every hour of the course, you earn 1.5 credit hours for preparation.

If you happen to already be taking a college course that is HR related, or your company is paying for you to attend seminars or workshops as a part of your professional development, there is no max on the number of credit hours that can be earned here. Be sure to use it towards your recertification.

**Recertification accomplished**

Well, you’re done! By engaging in activities such as these, you will have earned your required 60 hours without spending a dime, and you will have completed your recertification! An added bonus: Not only do you maintain your credentials, but you also have grown as an HR professional. You have taken on new projects at work, engaged in research to contribute to an HR blog, participated in webcasts and applied what you learned to your current position. You have gained great insight from your in-house training and taught a course yourself.

After all this, how can you not be a better HR professional? You are more confident, your contributions to the organization are making a positive impact and your peers are looking to you for answers. The leaders of your organization will have to stop to take notice. They can’t help but think, “There’s something to this recertification requirement!” You are showing the leaders of your organization how they benefit from recertification through you. You are backing up your words with action.

Now, you have their support.

For more on earning recertification credit hours see www.hrci.org/recertify.

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**LOOK NO FURTHER.**

We have thousands of recertification activities that have been pre-approved* for credit hours.

hr.ci.org/search

*Activities do not have to be pre-approved to be eligible for recertification credit.
Like charisma, leadership comes naturally to some people and eludes others. Fortunately, it is a teachable skill, and Seth Kahan has developed some great strategies for learning how to lead through changes and business innovation.

Seth Kahan, the author of our cover article on Cirque du Soleil, is an American leadership expert, trusted advisor to 60 CEOs, and writer who specializes in business innovation. For more than 15 years, he has worked hand-in-hand with CEOs to drive change. His bestseller on organizational transformation, Getting Change Right: How Leaders Transform Organizations from the Inside Out, presents a model of communications, involving a shift from a transactional view of information exchange to a collaborative construction of shared understanding. He also writes for Fast Company magazine and the Washington Post.

We spoke to him recently about his interest in business innovation:

Certified: How and why did you become interested in innovation in business?

Seth Kahan: When the economy dropped in 2008, a number of my CEO clients began struggling with business. I knew from my experience in change work that every downturn is an opportunity to pivot from traditional value generation and toward customers, serving them in their time of need. This attitude and action is often the differentiator between those who slide down in a difficult market and those who move up.

I began working with these leaders, helping them to find latent value that could be tapped, to expand and improve existing offerings and even break new ground. Innovation was a skill that not all possessed, and yet it was the very thing that was needed most. I took an interest in laying out the frameworks that make innovation successful; i.e., succeed in the market.

The two primary assets most important to surviving tough economic times and growing in good times are customers and talent. Strategic talent development and recruitment are the very levers you can pull to bring yourself out of a downward slide, and the same levers that can be used to put on speed when you are headed in the right direction.

C: What are the benefits a company can gain from focusing on and supporting innovation?

SK: Market fluctuations are a part of life. Change can happen fast, and it hurts sometimes. Count yourself lucky if you see it coming. You can get slammed by a market downturn, a new competitor, advances in technology or customer expectations. Wouldn’t it be great to turn the power of these forces to your advantage?

You can and you must become an expert in exploiting change. Judo is a martial art that achieves its goal when the artist does not fight the oncoming force, but uses its power and energy.
Change can happen fast, and it hurts sometimes. Count yourself lucky if you see it coming. You can get slammed by a market downturn, a new competitor, advances in technology or customer expectations. Wouldn’t it be great to turn the power of these forces to your advantage?

to maneuver, neutralize the opponent and maintain a superior position safe from harm. Leaders today must become judo masters. That’s what innovation is all about.

Innovation is intentional evolution. It is the deliberate and successful adaptation to circumstance that generates more than enough value enough to justify the investment.

C: Are there certain types or sizes of companies, or even entire industries, that are more likely to be innovative than others?

SK: Yes, but this is changing. Traditionally information technology has been willing to reinvent itself continuously, and you can see the fruits of their labors today. Companies like Apple, Google, Intel and Cisco are leading the market with exceptional products and services that are bringing the future to us today.

Now many companies are being forced to innovate. Two industries that come immediately to mind are printers and healthcare. After years of incremental change, both are being forced to innovate or die. The top 10 percent are succeeding and setting the pace for the others. But it’s been a bitter pill. There’s a lot of consolidation, because many are not making it.

C: What are some good examples of how an HR person or business leader can start shifting a company toward more innovation, or is it just something that some companies do and others don’t?

SK: When I go into work for an organization and I see the vice president of HR working hand-in-hand with the CEO, I know I am in a fortunate circumstance. Strategic talent development and acquisition are primary contributions an HR person can make to helping a company succeed.

Any organization that is helping its people to think in new ways, stay ahead of the curve, keep abreast of and master new technologies will need to keep its staff in continuous development as well as bring on people who deeply understand the new business models and frameworks that are emerging.

Shifting toward innovation is all about mindset. HR can help an organization by staying connected to the mission and business needs, then making sure that the talent can lead in that direction.

C: In addition to strategic talent development and recruitment, and a focus on mission and business needs, are there other top things that an HR person should focus on when trying to encourage innovation?

SK: To master innovation, there are eight critical competencies to develop. These skills create the foundation for successful operation in a difficult, tumultuous world.

These eight competencies enable proficiencies that at first glance are contradictory: flexibility and strength, rigor and improvisation, agility and force.

You need both the flexibility to be limber, responsive and quick. And you need the power to execute forcefully. Adaptable resilience is fortified when undergirded by vigorous might.

Without the competencies listed below, you are likely to be one but not the other.

You need systems in place to undergird your efforts. They should give you the foundation and comprehensive capacity that makes it possible to both change in real time and meet needs in flux—all without compromising quality.

Meticulous exactitude and precision are created with rigor yet often compromised by sudden change. With the competencies I list here, you can cultivate both, get the best of both worlds while sidestepping the weaknesses of each.

The ability to quickly change direction, agility, often comes at the cost of sheer power. It’s hard to be muscular and light-footed. But these skills bring both of these qualities to the foreground and improve them in combination.

The eight competencies are:

1. Exploiting Change—Because change is constant and now prevalent, you must learn to use its force to your advantage.

2. Changing the Game—There is no better way to control your destiny than to forge it.

3. Gathering Intelligence—Being well informed regarding your customers, your competition, the market and yourself is the knowledge you need to make skillful decisions.

4. Hitting the Bullseye—You must be absolutely clear what you are aiming at—value that drives behavior.

5. Creating Value—Get to know how to find, expand, intensify and grow value.


7. Getting Execution Right—Learn to get the right things done, and do them right.

8. Mainlining Innovation—The time is now for innovation to become a core capability, a relied upon function that is wielded with adroit dexterity and prowess. Every organization that is serious about innovation should take the steps to integrate and build systematic capacity—this is what I mean by mainlining innovation.
We invite you to experience the HR Certification Institute’s **Strategic HR + Innovation Series**: An afternoon of dynamic exchanges, expanding connections, professional growth and endless possibilities.

Launched in 2011, the Strategic HR + Innovation Series is an exclusive opportunity for certified HR professionals and forward-thinking business leaders to connect, challenge and explore the dynamic role HR can play in shaping the future of business and innovation.

**THIS FALL**

September 14  
Washington, DC  
Newseum

October 12  
Chicago, IL  
University of Chicago  
Booth School of Business – Gleacher Center

**IN THE FUTURE**

New York City

Toronto

San Francisco

Admission to the Strategic HR + Innovation Series is FREE. Advance registration is required. Recertification credit is available for attending this series.
THE HR UNIVERSE HAS BEEN RAPIDLY expanding around the globe, and Ali Salaam has been on the forefront of this trend in his little corner of the world. He is nothing short of a pioneer in Lebanon, becoming one of his country’s first human resources professionals when the field was still fledgling more than a decade ago. Salaam, 42, says he “stumbled” into HR back in the 1990s, and now he’s a staunch advocate of bolstering the rapidly growing field there.

“At the time, there was limited understanding of the field of HR,” Salaam says. “For most people, HR was simply an institution for managing payroll and talent. Over the past 5 to 10 years, people have started to become more aware of the value and importance of HR.” Now Lebanon ranks an impressive sixth in the world in number of certified HR professionals.

Salaam is the human resources director at Gulf Resources Corporation, a global group of companies specializing in the development of energy and other natural resources. He is also a part-time instructor at several local and regional providers of educational and training services, where he prepares candidates for the Professional in Human Resources (PHR®) and Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR®) certifications.

Salaam first became involved in human resources in the mid-1990s, immediately after graduating from Georgetown University with a B.S. in Foreign Service, with a focus in International Relations, Law and Organization. Salaam was one of the first HR professionals in Lebanon to receive the Global Professional in Human Resources (GPHR®) and the SPHR certifications.

In a break from the typical certification pathway, Salaam obtained his GPHR certification before his SPHR certification.

“Since I was working for an international company at the time, I wanted to find a certification that would really complement my experience,” he says. “The GPHR did that for me; it opened up opportunities for me in the region and made me more marketable in Lebanon.”

By obtaining his certifications, Salaam believes he’s been able to distinguish himself and gain a sense of confidence in his own knowledge and understanding of the legal side of HR. Since he had not done his studies in HR at a university, it seemed that obtaining the certifications could provide him with the tools he needed to succeed in an industry that continues to evolve. Salaam believes it was beneficial for him to later pursue the SPHR because it allowed him to learn about specific U.S. HR practices.

As awareness of HR increases in Lebanon, competition is growing in the jobs market, making certification even more important for HR professionals to stand out.

Lebanon is fast becoming more sophisticated in the HR world, a byproduct of more multinational companies investing in the country, such
As retail and pharmaceutical firms. As industry grows, the changes in the HR landscape are highlighting a need for labor laws that better address the concerns of workers, such as overtime compensation, in order to keep up with other countries, Salaam says.

While those laws are evolving, Salaam recognizes that his country has a way to go before catching up with the United States and other western countries. “Companies do not understand the legal and ethical obligations they have to their employees,” Salaam says.

As more multinational companies invest in Lebanon, Salaam says that knowledge of U.S. policies have also become increasingly important, such as President Lyndon B. Johnson’s Executive Order 11246, which required federal contractors to take “affirmative action” to hire without regard to race, religion and national origin.

“One example of the differences in labor laws is how exempt and non-exempt employees are compensated,” he says. “There is no distinction between the two in our part of the world. So employees who would be considered non-exempt in the U.S., and who stay at work late will not be paid overtime for their efforts.”

Salaam believes his country as a whole needs to be more outspoken and more of an advocate for aligning its labor laws to U.S. standards.

More and more companies in the retail and pharmaceutical industries are investing in Lebanon, and as the demand for certified HR professionals continues to rise, there will be a greater need for more education in HR. Moreover, HR will need to be more responsive, efficient and streamlined, he said.

“We can learn a lot from the U.S.’s human resources practices, not just about policies, but about where the missing parts are and where Lebanon can grow.”

Ali Salaam is a passionate HR practitioner, with over 14 years of international experience and has worked for leading multinational companies such as the Albert Abela Corporation, Investcom LLC, Azadea Group and AWI Company, where he was able to develop and apply solid HR practices and improve HR processes within challenging environments, tight deadlines and limited budgets.

Committed to continuous professional development, he earned certification in 2009 as a GPHR and in 2010 as a SPHR from the HR Certification Institute after having successfully passed a comprehensive and thorough set of examinations, demonstrating a strong background of professional and international HR knowledge and experience in the field.
Mentoring

YOUR ROAD MAP TO SUCCESS

By Nona Chigewe
Organizations and their employees have one vital purpose in common: both are striving to accomplish a life-changing, impactful goal that will propel them to new, extraordinary heights. On their way to reaching this destination, both are engaging in initiatives and searching for tools that will guide them and execute the journey to success.

There are many ways to reach goals and achieve each item sketched on our life's “to do list,” but we can't discount a sure-fire mapping tool used to direct organizations and their employees to their final destination, their own private island called success. This “GPS” is not new on the market but has been improved as more and more organizations and individuals have used it on many of their “road trips.” What is this fool-proof guide? Mentoring. Mentoring is a developmental tool used by organizations and individuals to accomplish growth, professional enhancement and organizational movement towards business objectives and personal achievement.

As we focus on innovation and staying ahead of the curve to gain an edge over the competition, it is important to clarify that innovation is not always creating or doing what has never been seen or done before. Sometimes, it is taking a formula that we know has worked in the past and revising the elements to adapt to changes and advancements in the world, in an industry or in a specific company. That is what is occurring in the world of mentoring. This time-tested formula has been around for decades and continues to have impact because of the way the tool has been reinvented to fit today's fast-paced, demanding world.

Let's examine the concept of mentoring. Mentoring is when one individual connects with another to share knowledge, experience and skills in a specific area of expertise. One individual is in a position of need and desires the knowledge and experience in that specific area of expertise. Traditionally, this connection was seen as a one-to-one, face-to-face relationship between one senior- or executive-level individual and one junior- or entry-level individual. This is no longer the case. Those involved in a mentoring relationship are no longer expected to be paired by hierarchy. In fact, mentoring is no longer seen as a relationship, but more of a partnership, according to Judy Corner, director consulting services/director of mentoring at Insala.

“In today's mentoring relationships, mentors are learning as much as the mentees,” Corner said. “Because there may be situations in which the mentee has the knowledge but just doesn't know how to apply it, it is no longer expected that an executive or senior-level person with years of experience has to be the mentor in the partnership.”

The form of mentoring partnerships has evolved greatly, allowing mentoring to remain relevant and valid in today's environment. One-to-one has grown to include group mentoring. This can include one mentor coaching several individuals or one mentee with more than one coach. Group mentoring can even go as far as having more than one mentor and mentee sharing and exchanging knowledge. Then there is flash mentoring, which is a one-time meeting between mentor and mentee. This can also occur in a group setting or — similar to speed dating — speed mentoring, in which mentors and mentees meet for a few minutes and rotate to another partner until the end of the mentoring session.

Another form of “flash mentoring” also includes sequential mentoring, in which a mentee will meet with different mentors through a series of one-time meetings over a specific period of time. The idea behind flash mentoring is to provide meaningful and valuable learning opportunities requiring limited monetary and time commitment. And yet another evolution is situational mentoring, which takes a mentor who is highly experienced in one specific area of expertise and that alone becomes the focus of the mentoring partnership. Even though these forms of mentoring have the purpose of getting an objective accomplished more quickly, one truth remains the same: When pointed to the right objective and goal, all forms of mentoring are effective when it serves the intended purpose.

Face-to-face mentoring is another concept that was once a rule but is now an option. Due to the expansion of technology and social media and its fast-evolving nature, the way in which we communicate changes daily. This growth has impacted and
modified the mentoring partnership. Platforms such as Skype, Facebook, email, Instant Messenger and video conferencing now create a way for individuals to connect in a mentoring relationship when that would have been impossible in the past due to geographic location and cost.

However, even though these platforms allow mentoring to take place without in-person meetings, Vetri Vellore, CEO of Chronus, says that a blended model is recommended.

“By blending virtual meetings with traditional face-to-face meetings in a mentoring relationship, you can get more done while creating the trust needed in a mentoring relationship,” Vellore said. “Including both the personal touch of face-to-face to build trust and rapport and the convenience of virtual meetings to ensure that everyday life does not get in the way of keeping the partnership moving, aids in creating a more enriching experience. This can be as easy as connecting by phone or meeting at a conference or professional event.”

To ensure that a mentoring partnership works, there are a few elements that cannot be substituted or removed. All mentoring partnerships serve the purpose of development and growth. No matter the form, at the end of the day both parties are involved in this partnership for the betterment of self. In order to make sure this happens, all mentoring partnerships must be based on trust. Trust is what keeps the partnership moving forward and allows goals to be met. Without it, there is no open communication, the ability for the mentor and mentee to connect becomes challenging, or even impossible, and eventually the partnership diminishes. To build that trust, the next element that must be present in order for a mentoring partnership to work is honesty. Without honesty, there can’t be trust in the relationship. And, conversely, honesty is built on the trust formed between mentor and mentee. Mentors need to trust in the partnership enough to provide honest critical feedback that will transform their mentee. Mentees need trust in order to be honest about their needs, their ultimate goals and what is it they want to learn and take away for the partnership.

Once trust and honesty is established, another critical element of the relationship is that the mentee “take the driver’s seat” in the mentoring relationship, according to Corner.

“The partnership must be mentee-driven and mentor-guided to ensure that the ultimate goals are achieved, needs are met and results are produced as expected,” Corner explained. “The mentee is the center of the partnership and defines the type and structure of the partnership. The experience the mentee receives is determined by the mentee, so the mentee needs to tell the mentor where it is he/she wants to go and what they are driving towards. The mentee is the driver on this road trip. The mentor is there to guide and serves as the one who steps on his/her set of brakes, if needed.”

Once the mentee has taken the driver’s seat, there are a few steps the mentee and mentor must take to ensure the partnership is on the correct course. Together, they must create an agreement for the partnership, similar to a contract among partners. This agreement is used to assist the partners by outlining regular meeting times, goals and objectives for the partnership, how goals will be accomplished and when, they need to stop and redefine any terms for the partnership should they get off course or the road gets a little bumpy. Discussing these terms early on, when the connection is made, provides a road map for both the mentee and mentor to follow. Constructing this map together guarantees that both parties have the same guide and are heading toward the same destination. Without a map to follow, mentors and mentees may find that goals are not being met, communication has broken down and no development is taking place. By the time the partners have realized they have lost their way, it may be too late to recalculate their route and find new directions to their expected results.

When deciding to participate in a mentoring partnership,
participants should be aware that dedication and commitment will be necessary. All the right elements can be present, parameters set and directions mapped out, but without the willingness to dedicate time and the determination to see goals achieved, mentors and mentees may find themselves falling short. The output will be determined by the input. Whether the partnership is for one meeting or for several months, the return on investment for hard work is the knowledge and professional growth achieved at the end.

Both the mentor and mentee will be rewarded for the time committed to their mentoring partnership. Mentors obtain a sense of satisfaction that comes from knowing their investment in someone else is positive and assists in bettering the future for that individual. Not only is the mentor working to develop the mentee, but he/she also is helping to improve their profession and society as a whole because what the mentee has learned is going to be applied and hopefully produce positive outcomes.

On the other side of the partnership, the mentee is in a position to be a sponge, soaking up and learning all that he/she can from the mentor. They are also receiving individual, one-on-one attention. Corner reminds us, “The last time we all received individual attention was in kindergarten. The opportunity to have the focus be on you does not come around every day, and mentoring provides that for the mentee.” According to Vellore, during a mentoring partnership, the mentee is offered a “crystal ball,” which offers a glimpse into your future. “You get to see your career through the eyes of someone who has walked in your shoes. What other resource allows you that opportunity? I don’t know of any other.”

The benefits do not stop there. Organizations that offer mentoring programs receive value as well. Mentor programs allow organizations to truly take inventory of their talent and internal resources. Leaders arise from mentoring programs, and talents are recognized and discovered. Organizations are provided insight and discover leadership talent that otherwise may have been overlooked because some individuals excel more easily when given individual attention. Corner points out that organizations also benefit from “just-in-time” learning.

“Mentors within an organization know the immediate needs of the organization. When providing guidance to the mentee, these needs are top of mind and can be applied directly back to the job,” Corner explained. “Mentoring is one of the most cost effective and time efficient tools an organization can use to develop its employees. It is the one tool that taps into the wealth of knowledge a company has to teach others.”

The knowledge described here by Corner belongs to the employees of any organization because they bring their diverse backgrounds, skills and experience, which can be shared and exchanged with others. The resources are right there within each and every organization. “Organizations that do not have a mentoring program in place are missing a great opportunity,” she continued. “Mentoring offers an opportunity to develop staff with relevant, timely information that will impact the business at little to no cost.”

So when is a good time for organizations to consider implementing a mentoring program? The questions that Vellore challenges organizational leaders to ask themselves are:

- When is it not a good time for organizations to implement a mentoring program?
- Is there any business situation that is not applicable to a mentor program?

Let’s examine it. “Mentor programs can be used in many situations. For example, when an organization is growing and bringing on new employees to keep up with that growth, one of the key concerns is finding time to bring new employees up to speed while ensuring that current employees are able to succeed,” said Vellore.

Another is when an organization is introducing new products or entering new markets. There is a great deal of research that needs be done for the entire organization to reduce the number of “bloopers” that could occur. Even when an organization has to downsize and must make tough decisions about employees, programs or business entities to keep or let go, having a mentor program in place can be a great resource.

Whenever there is a need to reduce the time it takes to transfer knowledge and continue to move at the current pace of business, a mentor program is a great platform to facilitate the process. This process results in new employees becoming acclimated to the organization more quickly, staff members sharing their experiences that are applicable to the new products or markets the organization is ready to take on, the emergence of
thinking about becoming a mentor or mentee

A Good Mentor:
• Is a good listener
• Knows how to give constructive feedback
• Communicates well
• Receives constructive feedback
• Empathizes with others
• Cares and wants to help others
• Is available and accessible

A Good Mentee:
• Is available and accessible
• Cares and wants to help others
• Empathizes with others
• Receives constructive feedback
• Knows how to give constructive feedback
• Is a good listener
• Is willing to communicate and identify needs

“Mentoring is applicable to every organization at every time,” Vellore reiterates.

There are a few check points that organizations will want to build into the mapping of a mentoring program for their employees. The most vital aspect is the structure of the program. Just as each mentoring partnership must have goals in order to work, every mentoring program must have overarching goals as well. There should be a clear and focused understanding as to what the program should do. The expected outcome will need to be well defined and communicated to organizational leaders as well as participants. Everything that the mentor and mentee engage in should point back to the program's overall objectives. In addition, the goals of the program must align to the business strategy of the organization. Mentor programs will impact the business and will do so in a positive and constructive manner if the goals of the program support the direction in which the organization is headed. This becomes the organization’s road map for its mentoring program.

Keep in mind, as business initiatives evolve, so should the goals and objectives of the mentoring program. From time to time, organizations will need to stop and review these goals and objectives to keep up with change. The plan that has been crafted for the mentoring program should not be written in stone, because there is always more than one route that can be taken to reach intended destinations. The job of the organization is to select the best one to take depending on the conditions that surround the organization. What is the “weather” like (what is the business climate in which we are conducting business)? Will there be “traffic” (any industry roadblocks or new competition of which to be aware)? Do we have enough for gas (what is our budget)? How are we traveling (what are the resources needed to accomplish the business initiatives)? Do we currently have access to those resources? These are questions to ask when creating the structure of the mentor program and when reviewing if the structure is still working or if adjustments are needed to stay on track.

The health of a mentor program can be determined by inspecting a few factors. The number one element to inspect is the stated goals. Whether goals have been accomplished says it all and shows whether the structure that was put in place is achieving what it was set out to do.

Also, organizations should review whether the impacts that the program was expected to make are being experienced and whether impacts that weren’t anticipated are being realized. Participation in the program also speaks volumes. When those involved in the program are seeing their own goals come to fruition, it shows that the program is working. Actually having participation and individuals wanting to take part is another indication that mentoring is doing its job. Also, if the program was created in a manner that aligns with an organization’s business objectives, then management should begin to see the effects in greater knowledge sharing, greater productivity and more workplace enthusiasm.

Is there any reason why an organization or individual should not become involved in a mentoring program? Are there disadvantages of mentoring? I couldn’t find any. We all have a place in life that we are working hard every day to achieve and a final destination that we are striving to reach. What is great about this, it usually isn’t somewhere that someone else hasn’t already been to. With all the other stops on the way to success, we meet individuals who can change our lives forever: Individuals who are willing to talk about where they have been, how they got there and what it took to get to where they are today. Why not take the time to stop and engage with them? Why not provide the forum that allows others to connect with one another, encouraging learning and applying new knowledge to grow oneself and the companies for which they work?

When asked why he is such a big advocate of mentoring, Vellore replied, “Its impact is in helping people change their lives by transferring knowledge and providing guidance. It’s helping people realize their goals. I was able to see my guidance and advice play a role in improving someone else’s life.” ■
With this publication’s focus on innovation, we’ve come to realize that many things spur innovation — changes in technology, economic challenges and competition. Some companies respond quickly and nimbly while others falter. Why is that?

There is no exact formula for innovation, but it does take hard work and a willingness to take risks. There are some “myths” surrounding innovation, however, which may keep some companies from thriving. Rubens Pessanha Filho, PMP, GPHR, author of @HRCertain and researcher for the HR Certification Institute, recently studied Great by Choice: Uncertainty, Chaos, and Luck — Why Some Thrive Despite Them All, by Jim Collins and Morten T. Hansen, and learned about these myths.

“As a researcher and someone who specializes in human resources from a global perspective, I am fascinated by how companies create a culture of innovation,” said Pessanha Filho. “What was really interesting was that Jim Collins and Morten Hansen and their researchers found that much of what we believe to be true about innovators — that they are lucky or visionary or really fast to react — is, in fact, not true in the case of highly successful and innovative companies.

“The book studied high-performing companies and labeled those that thrived as ‘10X,’ because they beat their industry indices by at least 10 times, despite uncertainty and even chaos in their markets,” Pessanha Filho continued.

“They then compared those 10X companies to others in the same industry that didn’t fare as well.”

Through their research, Collins, Hansen and researchers identify the following “myths” about innovation and share what they found that debunks them.

**Entrenched Myth 1:** “Successful leaders in a turbulent world are bold, risk-seeking visionaries.”

Collins and Hansen found that of those studied, the best leaders “… observed what worked, figured out why it worked, and built upon proven foundations. They were not more risk taking, more bold, more visionary, and more creative than the comparisons. They were more disciplined, more empirical, and more paranoid.”

**Entrenched Myth 2:** “Innovation distinguishes 10X companies in a fast moving, uncertain, and chaotic world.”

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**Entrenched Myth 3:** “A threat-filled world favors the speedy; you’re either the quick or the dead.”

Collins and Hansen said that, “The idea that leading in a ‘fast world’ always requires ‘fast decisions’ and ‘fast action’ — and that we should embrace an overall ethos of ‘Fast! Fast! Fast!’ — is a good way to get killed. 10X leaders figure out when to go fast, and when not to.”

**Entrenched Myth 4:** “Radical change on the outside requires radical change on the inside.”

According to the book, the case studies changed less than the comparison cases. “Just because your environment is rocked by dramatic change does not mean that you should inflict radical change upon yourself.”

**Entrenched Myth 5:** “Great enterprises with 10X success have a lot more good luck.”

The companies that Collins and Hansen studied had both good and bad luck. According to their research, it wasn’t that they had more luck, but how the luck was leveraged that made the difference.

“HR professionals can learn from this, and other, research and help their executives identify areas for professional growth that will help not only the executive, but also the company, to thrive,” said Pessanha Filho. “Even more importantly, the HR leader can help employees blend creativity with discipline at all levels… imagine the success a company would find if its HR leaders understood and led scalable innovation by helping us manage this paradox!”
Running off to join the circus has its romantic appeal, but Cirque du Soleil’s Pat Norris, director of human resources, knows the practical side of managing the magic.

Cirque du Soleil is no ordinary employer. It is one of the world’s largest artistic entertainment companies with more than 5,000 employees from over 50 countries, performing 20+ shows in over 270 cities around the world.

Working in Las Vegas as the director of human resources: Resident Shows Division, is Pat Norris, SPHR. Norris has the distinction of having single-handedly set up the HR function for Cirque du Soleil when they signed on with Disney to do its show, La Nouba, in Orlando.

The curtain went up in 1998, and Norris was there putting things in place, including partnering with Disney, receiving the talent and developing the HR policies and procedures.

I had the chance to catch up with him in Las Vegas and talk about what it is like to direct HR services within such an audacious company and his pioneering experience with a very special show. »
SETH KAHAN: Pat, what it’s like to work for one of the world’s most creative and fast-growing entertainment organizations?

PAT NORRIS: We have international headquarters in Quebec, and there we have the people who develop the strategy. Here in Las Vegas, we execute the strategy, and in a business such as ours we have to have a very collaborative culture.

Cirque is a hive. There is activity everywhere. It’s all exciting, and it’s all about the show.

When I was first hired we were a very different organization. It has been a thrilling ride to get to where we are today, and we are by no means finished. The future is extraordinarily exciting. It is a privilege to serve such an exceptional company.

I have the opportunity to work with world-class artists every day and see them exercise their amazing talents. This is true not just of the performers, but the managers, the directors, in fact every single person who makes the show a reality. They are all the best in the world at what they do.

Since I began with Cirque, we have diversified our show content to stay true to the spirit of the original thrust, but we break new ground all the time.

Cirque is on the frontier of live entertainment. We have gone beyond the original presentations, which were pioneering in their day, and continue to push the envelope on what is possible.

Talent acquisition is critical in an organization like ours. They have to be able to bring the show to life night after night. They do it with skill and spirit repeatedly, systematically, and always keep it fresh. Every moment in a live show is a discovery of what can be done. That is our magic.

When I provide great service in HR — and that’s an innovation unto itself here — it impacts the performers on stage. This directly affects the people who come to see the show, and that has an influence on our ability to spread happiness throughout the world and be audacious as we do it.

I may not feel the applause like I would if I were performing, but it is real nonetheless to me. I am attuned to it; it is just as tangible and powerfully rewarding.

KAHAN: Tell me about recruiting and working with the performers.

NORRIS: The artists who come to us often have no idea what it is like to be part of an organization like ours, because there is no other organization like Cirque!

They come from the Olympic world, federations, private gyms and even the street from our Cirque du Monde (literally translated, World Circus).

The people who come to us not only have amazing talents, they have internal assets. For example, some bring an athletic mindset that is self-motivated. They challenge themselves to perfect their performance. They work extremely well within a team structure.

Others bring a performance mindset which centers on their ability to carry the moment on stage in front of a live audience. They have a keen eye as to what it takes to succeed professionally under that kind of pressure. They know how to deliver their best and do it in a way that conveys powerfully to an audience.

We have two platforms to recruit talent. There is a platform driven by our art talent acquisition group, and we have a casting agency. Interested people can upload their videos on our website and gain an amazing amount of information.

It is the place to go if you want to explore working with us. It will teach you what we are about and how we operate, as well as introduce you to life in Cirque du Soleil with great creativity and bold transparency.

KAHAN: What was it like to open HR in Orlando for La Nouba?

NORRIS: When I first started, I was part of the Division of the Americas. They gave me a policy and procedure manual as a guideline, and I put together a set of standards according to U.S. labor law that I thought would make sense to a theatrically-
Pat Norris, SPHR
Pat Norris, SPHR, is the director of human resources: Resident Shows Division for Cirque du Soleil. He has been with Cirque du Soleil since 2005. Certified since 2007, Norris has been in HR for more than 14 years, starting out as an HR representative at Universal Studios in Orlando.
We make a boisterous attempt to celebrate our performers’ diversity and individuality. It’s part of our brand and it is one of our great strengths. So, here you have this clash of cultures. Neither was wrong; in fact, both have worked immeasurably well.
I had a benefit plan that was created for me under a Canadian model, so I had to start all over. The immigration piece I added was very cut and dry because it was driven by Immigration and Naturalization Service (now called the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services).

Kahan: What was it like for you personally when you began with Cirque du Soleil?

Norris: Even though we have a lot of really smart and creative people, your success here lives and dies on relationship-building. People who have a natural ability to communicate well, who are authentic and transparent, do well here.

You must learn to work your relationships to advance the company and the show. Once I figured that out I knew what I had to do. I had to figure out the culture, figure out when I was going to listen and when I was going to be ballsy and try to influence.

Initially, there was an old-school mentality among some of the original Cirque aficionados. They projected an image that Cirque already did things the right way, but they also knew that we were all about bringing innovation to life, and that meant constant improvement.

I don't speak French-Canadian, and so I was initially looked at askance. I was not readily considered to be part of the culture by some. I had to be patient and persistent. I also was faced with this large challenge. I had to communicate that if we were going to be in this sphere at this time with this partner that we needed to do things a particular way so that we could be successful. That is what I did for the first few years.

Kahan: What was it like after La Nouba launched?

Norris: I was with La Nouba for seven and a half years. The challenge of being on a show for that length of time is knowing where to find your applause. I found my value to the company in the service I provided to the artists. It was deeply and personally meaningful to me. Relating to the artists themselves was something I took great pride in and found real personal joy doing.

We do not operate like a traditional Broadway show. On Broadway, the cast comes in, they know their lines, they call their places, and they do the show. We run it differently.

Every day between 4:00 and 6:00, our show is constructed on a board. The stage manager knows who can do what, who is sick and who has particular talents. They plug the right people in to do the next show. They literally construct the show.

Then they brief everyone, and they do the show. And they do it all over again before the second show because things change. »
Someone could be hurt or sick.

If somebody does something silly, egregious, I cannot be a policeman and go and run that person down. I cannot read them the riot act. I cannot say, “You have to follow your contract! You have to follow the rules! You have to talk nice to people... or refrain from whatever interesting act you were engaged in.” I am not going to do that. It could ruin the show.

I have had traditional HR people come and say to me, “You get that involved?” Yes, I do. My people require a different level of service.

Let’s say something happens, and I have to intervene. That person’s going to be on stage! I always have to keep in my mind the most important thing: their ability to be present and bring the show to life.

I have had other HR professionals tell me that a particular person needed to be reprimanded—perhaps, but at the convenience of the show. They would say, “No, no, no! You must communicate to them so they know.” My response is, “Yes, you’re right. After the show.”

I will find a way to communicate with that person. They have artistic souls. I have to finesse the message, yet get the message across. Most importantly I have to finesse the message, yet get them on the stage in good spirits.

I sometimes have the pleasure of going to sit in the audience and watch the show after an interaction. I get to watch that person do their magic. Sometimes they can even see me in the audience.

They come back to me after the show and they say, “How did I do?” Isn’t that wonderful? I say, “You were great!” And then I add, “But remember that is only one reason why you are here. The beauty you demonstrate out there is amazing and important. But the behavior you conduct backstage is equally important, and you can’t do whatever it is that you just did.”

They have asked me, “Why did you stay for the show?” I always tell them, “Because I want you to know that I love what you do out there.”
Cirque du Soleil

Cirque du Soleil is a Quebec-based company recognized world over for high-quality, artistic entertainment. Since its dawn in 1984, Cirque du Soleil has constantly sought to evoke the imagination, invoke the senses and provoke the emotions of people around the world.

In 1984, 73 people worked for Cirque du Soleil. Today, the business has 5,000 employees worldwide, including more than 1,300 artists. At the Montreal International Headquarters alone, there are close to 2,000 employees.

More than 100 types of occupations can be found at Cirque. The company’s employees and artists represent more than 50 nationalities and speak 25 different languages.

More than 100 million spectators have seen a Cirque du Soleil show since 1984. Close to 15 million people will see a Cirque du Soleil show in 2012.
Connect with other HR professionals through our new Certification Mentor Program.

Join in on the opportunity to learn from a network of HR professionals. Find out how at www.hrci.org/mentorprogram.
DATA POINT

I Wish I Knew: HR Professionals Give Advice to Their Younger Selves

By Dr. Cristina de-Mello-e-Souza Wildermuth

Fresh out of college and in my early twenties, I sit at my desk in a large and rather luxurious building. I watch the minutes go by… painfully and slowly. This is my first corporate full-time job. I’m bored — out of my mind bored. There is nothing to do — nothing to occupy my mind or challenge my intelligence. I am expected to look the part: dress well, impress the director’s guests and bring an aura of respectability and professionalism to the office. I type long letters and make sure there are no mistakes. I could leave my brain at home, day dream all day long and still do this job with my eyes closed. Nervously, I consider my options. Will my reputation suffer if I just can’t stand another day? Might I get a transfer to a more interesting assignment? Should I wait a year? And if I do need to wait…how can I stand working here until I’m ready to leave?

As I write this article, I catch myself pitying the young woman I was so many years ago. I felt trapped in a job I hated and everyone else seemed to love. After all, this was a large and reputable organization – TV Globo, the largest TV network in my native Brazil. My classmates perfectly understood a History major’s temptation to just “take whatever job I could.” My friends envied my ability to finally afford nice new clothes and a professional look. As for me – I was just miserable. Counting minutes. Wondering, “What next?”

I wonder what I would tell myself if I had the chance to go back. I would probably urge young Cris to get out of that job as fast as possible. Get a master’s degree. Travel abroad. Do something — anything. Mostly, I would tell my younger self to respect my intelligence and potential and not even dream of settling for less.

Intrigued by this scenario, I posted a question on the Linked:HR Discussion Page. Linked:HR is a mega international LinkedIn group dedicated to the HR field. As of the end of April of 2012, the group had 648,885 members. Specifically, I asked Linked:HR members the following:

Imagine that a “time machine” allows you to go back in time and coach your younger self. What advice would you give yourself? Would you do anything differently? Are you pleased with the mentors you found, the experiences you had and the formal courses you took along the way?

I received over 127 responses to my query. This article summarizes these responses, breaking them up into eight major themes. The themes are listed in alphabetical order and defined in Table 1.

Balance Work & Life
Participants advised their younger selves to slow down, relax and prioritize their families. For instance, one participant commented:

“I would tell my younger self to take the afternoon off and enjoy time with those who matter in my life because at the end of the day your family doesn’t care how many hours you trained, how many hours you spent coaching an employee through a hard issue or whether you saved the company time or money. They just care about whether they matter more than work.”

Other examples of work-life balance comments included:

• Take each day as it comes and don’t stress over things you have no control over.
• Prioritize getting a good night’s sleep; it’s the key to better mood, productivity and creativity.
• Your work is not your life. Don’t ever confuse the two.

A related subtheme was the need not to take oneself too seriously and embrace a sense of humor and fun. For instance, one participant advised her younger self to, “Enjoy it! HR is great fun, but you
do have to have quite a dark sense of humor.”

Participant comments were aligned with research on burnout and “energy” at work. Arguably, such “energy” is a finite (albeit renewable) resource (Fritz, Lam & Spreitzer, 2011). One must take the time to recuperate one’s energy after a long day at work. For instance, Sonnentag (2003) connected managerial engagement with the time spent recovering during evenings or weekends. Managers who did not take regular time off were less engaged.

**Lessons learned:**
Respect your limits. Take time off. Find a hobby. Remember that life is short and work will still be there when you come to the office tomorrow.

**Connect to Others**
The need to build relationships was a strong theme. Participants warned their younger selves to network intensely, cultivating connections and learning from others. Examples of comments included:

- Spend conscious time building your network just for its own sake.

**Lessons learned:**
Kindness and likability matter. An HR professional must connect to others and understand how his or her work affects others. Respect the power you were given.

**Find a Mentor**
A quick search within the data set revealed 48 occurrences of the words “mentor” or “mentoring.” The message was strong. HR professionals should actively seek, nurture and capitalize on mentoring relationships. For instance:

- Have multiple mentors: You need different ones at each stage of your life.
- In most situations I ask myself, “What would (my mentor) do?,” and I can usually be as effective as I need to be.
- I went through 90 percent of my path to HR completely on my own, and it was not until I found a mentor that I realized what I had been missing.

Curiously, not all mentoring relationships mentioned were formal or long-term. Further, not all mentors were senior professionals. Instead, informal and brief mentoring relationships with peers or other colleagues were perceived as valuable. One intriguing example was offered by a senior HR consultant specializing in litigation strategy. Here is what he said:

- When I first joined my first consulting firm, the office manager took me to the bullpen on a different floor than the C-suite and showed me my new desk, etc. Then she said, “Never come here again. Spend your free time in the library at the conference table.” I did, and within a few weeks I had met every general partner of the firm. Because I had an open date book, I got to help immediately on a lot of big-deal assignments handled by these partners and other senior consultants who used the library. Although it was only a suggestion from an office manager, it turned out to be one of the greatest and most important internal networking experiences which I think launched my career.

TABLE 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advice to Younger Self Themes</th>
<th>This theme had to do with…</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balance Work and Life</td>
<td>Taking the time to relax, appreciate one’s family and recover one’s energies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connect to Others</td>
<td>Paying conscious attention to the building of one’s network, being kind to and considerate of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find a Mentor</td>
<td>Seeking and capitalizing on the expertise of others, giving back to the field by mentoring others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow Your Passion</td>
<td>Building self-awareness and seeking opportunities that closely align to one’s talents, interests and values; moving on when needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have Courage</td>
<td>Living one’s values, accepting responsibility and taking a stand when appropriate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep on Learning</td>
<td>Continuously honing one’s skills and increasing one’s knowledge both formally and informally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand the Business</td>
<td>Learning the business lingo, gaining experience in non-HR areas such as sales, marketing and finance</td>
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Sometimes contacts will come in useful later; sometimes they won’t, but if you build connections just for the sake of their enjoyment, that too is a blessing. The relationships you make as a young professional will come back to help (or haunt) you later in your career. So be mindful of how you treat folks, and keep in touch with former colleagues!

The last comment relates to another powerful subtheme: Be kind. Participants advised their younger selves to appreciate others, empathize with their needs, forgive human frailties and “be there” for employees and peers. For instance:

- Be forgiving of others; we’re all trying to get by.
- Help someone along the way. Be nice to everyone you meet, not just because you will run into them again in your career (and you will) but because it’s the right thing to do.

**Find a Mentor**
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One might argue that the above excerpt exemplifies networking, not mentoring. Possibly, however, the relationship between the consultant and the office manager matches what Fajana
and Gbajumo-Sheriff (2011) call Reverse Mentoring – the mentoring provided to a senior person (in terms of age, experience or rank) by his or her junior. Other mentoring models suggested by Fajana and Gbajumo-Sheriff included informal mentoring (relationships built by the mentor and mentee directly, without a formal structure), group mentoring (a formal process involving one mentor and several mentees), peer mentoring (mentoring relationships among peers) and situational mentoring (short-term, “just in time” assistance provided to a mentee when needed). Whichever the format, participants recommended that HR professionals return the favor by mentoring others.

**Lessons learned:**
Don’t do it alone. Seek others’ guidance. Get support. Understand that great mentors may be found in unusual places; they don’t have to be part of a formal mentoring program or have a high-ranking title. Further, give back to the HR field by sharing your mentoring gifts with others.

**Follow Your Passion**
Participants’ voices were clear: Find yourself. Be yourself. Seek that which fills you with enthusiasm and joy. For instance:
- Take the next position that you are passionate about and that fits you and your goals.
- Don’t look at the market first for what’s needed or wanted and try to adapt yourself to what the market needs. The market needs you to be you; the market, the world, needs you to be the best version of you.

Participants acknowledged, however, that before one “finds one’s passion,” one needs to engage in self-searching. Most people, one participant suggested, “don’t see the real person in the mirror.” Self-awareness, thus, is key.

The elusive search for passion is the topic of a research study I’m currently conducting with two colleagues: Dr. Amy Vaughan, professor of Statistics at Drake University, and Dr. Anne Christo-Baker, professor of Organizational Leadership at Purdue. Our purpose is to identify the “path to passion” – the formula connecting personality, psychological conditions of engagement and emotional engagement (defined as one’s level of enthusiasm, pride and excitement for one’s job). Here is a preview of our findings so far: “Passion” depends on the meaningfulness of one’s job, the extent to which the job feels valuable to the individual and is valued by the organization. Meaningfulness, on the other hand, is strongly influenced by fit, the relationship between a person’s personality, skills and talents and the requirements of the job. Indeed, “meaningfulness” and “fit” have the strongest effect on the “passion formula.”

Remarkably, one’s path to passion could lead an HR professional to seek alternative job opportunities. Several Linked:HR members urged their younger selves to take “control of their destiny” and leave undesirable or outgrown jobs whenever needed. For example:
- Recognize when it’s time to move on; most of us outgrow where we are over time.
- If you’re feeling good, doing well, move on while you’re strong. The only way you learn and grow is to move from your comfort zone and tackle new things. It’s also how you get noticed.

Realistically, the ability to move on hinges on a professional’s financial health and independence. Thus, participants recommended their younger selves to save money and live economically. For example:
- When an in-house HR professional is so financially dependent on a particular salary at a particular company, objectivity melts away. You need to be able to afford to say to yourself, “This place is not for me.”
- Sock away money, live frugally, don’t have debt — to be able to afford your integrity.

The last comment relates to the next theme in the data set: integrity and courage.

**Have Courage**
HR management is not for the faint of heart. HR professionals must be fearless and willing to be courageous and stand up and lead. Further, HR professionals must be clear on and committed to their values. Courage and integrity comments included:
- Stick to your values always, no matter what the consequences may be.
- Speak up if you feel something is wrong – do not hesitate.

Thus, HR professionals should not act as silent bystanders. Participants wanted their younger selves to “have an opinion” and “learn to speak [their] mind in a way that does not hurt others.” Such willingness to express opinions and values, however, might depend on one’s level of self-confidence. To that effect, participants offered the following advice:
- Conquering fear and insecurity can change everything.
- Never allow hard environments or people to rob your self-confidence.

**Lessons learned:**
Practice the artistry of ethics. Clarify your own values. Believe in your strength. Take a stand.

**Keep on Learning**
Relatively little research has been conducted on the workplace learning of HR professionals (Crouse, Doyle & Young, 2011). Instead, most research focuses...
on the work of HR professionals as they plan the learning of others. Reasonably, the learning of professionals whose job involves planning learning interventions deserves further research and attention.

Participants strongly encouraged their younger selves to “never stop learning.” In fact, there were over 50 instances of the word “learn” (or related words such as “learning” and “learner”) in the data set. Examples of “learning” advice included:

• Keep learning absolutely everything! Don’t ever stop the thirst for knowledge.
• Learn from others constantly by observing. Sometimes you will learn what to do – sometimes you will learn what NOT to do. Both are valuable lessons.

Listening was a strongly emphasized skill throughout the data set. One person suggested that better listening skills could have been career changing. “Every single person, no matter who they are, wants to be heard, and they want their opinion to be valued,” one participant said. “If I was armed with this knowledge back in the day, who knows, more doors could have been opened.”

Life-long learning, therefore, could result from informal opportunities (networking, mentoring and listening to others). Participants, however, also recommended younger professionals to secure formal degrees. Several recommended master’s degrees, HR certifications and the study of foreign languages. For example:

• [Don’t] stop your education, even when an employer says it’s not needed or a waste of money. Because if you choose to stop your education, if/when you decide it’s time to move on and up… you’ve fallen behind your peers in certifications and education.
• Become highly educated, focusing both in business and in HR.
• My advice to my younger self would be to take a master’s degree. I composed my education of short-term university and commercial school diplomas, and much later I realized that a full-blown master’s degree would be much more useful (the subject is less important). I would have given my younger self the same advice. I had the privilege of completing my education with a master’s degree in Training and Development and a doctorate in Leadership Studies. Earning those degrees earlier, however, could have accelerated my career and income history. My advice to younger professionals: Don’t wait. It won’t get easier, cheaper or more convenient. Just do it.

Lessons learned:
Keep on learning. Always.

Understand the Business

In 2008, two young Harvard graduates and new HR professionals, wrote:

A career in HR isn’t the typical destination of a Harvard MBA. We’re supposed to be employed as strategy consultants or investment bankers or, in the true spirit of the degree, general managers. We once had jobs like those, but we don’t now, and we know what our classmates are thinking: “It’s a work/life balance thing.” “They don’t have the stomach for ‘real’ business.” “If you can’t do, teach.” And, of course, our favorite: “If they’re so interested in helping people, why don’t they just go into social work?” (Breitfelder & Dowling, 2008)

Participants in the Linked:HR discussion, however, would have disagreed with the premise that the HR field is not about “real business.” Instead, they strongly encouraged younger professionals to become business savvy. Several recommended non-HR experiences in sales, marketing or other fields. For instance:

• Work in the business world in a management position before setting your cap for the HR executive position. This gives you a much different perspective and a reality check on how HR can be more effective.
• First, before starting your HR career, get into an entry-level sales or revenue-generating role early in your career. HR practitioners who cannot demonstrate a full understanding of how and why a business operates are not valuable partners.
• If my goal was to become a CHRO, I would spend my first 10 years learning the business of business (sales, marketing, operations and finance). My next five years would be spent in HR in recruiting, training and development, learning the skills of building teams, organizations and leadership.

Even when alternative non-HR experiences are impossible, however, young HR professionals were strongly counseled to expand their financial knowledge and skills and learn the business lingo. Participants suggested:

• I would get a better foundation of quantitative analyses and not think of Personnel as the warm and fuzzy arm of the organization. After all these years, standard deviation pops up in project management, job analysis, Six Sigma. Eventually, management demands demonstrated ROI, from analysis of data in job analyses/compensation to metrics to determine productivity, i.e., what isn’t measured isn’t perceived to be valuable.

I agree. Today I encourage my students to choose the research methods that most scare them — and learn them just the same.

Lessons learned:
As an HR professional, you are part of the world of business. You cannot influence that world without understanding it.
LESS THAN FIVE YEARS AGO, THE TYPICAL policy that companies had toward social media was simple: No. But that is no longer a viable approach, given the fact that Facebook has more than 900 million active users worldwide – both individuals and companies post news and updates; approximately 131.2 million people are active users of LinkedIn, a site designed purely for business networking; and more than 140 million companies and individuals use Twitter to “tweet” their news on a regular basis.

For many companies, HR recruiting efforts have led the way in the social media arena. Recruiters quickly saw the value and the need to use LinkedIn, Facebook and other outlets not only for hiring, but also for helping to spread the company message.

In today’s world, a company cannot “ban” these sites when it is using them for branding and other efforts. According to William Tincup, SPHR, host of DriveThruHR and social media expert, high-level HR practitioners should realize that social media outlets are really just new technologies that can be beneficial once utilized effectively.

“It is all about overcoming the fear of failure,” Tincup said. “Social media is new, but really it isn’t. Once you understand that, everything becomes easy. Think back to when fax machines first came to the office, or the first copier, or even when email got launched at the company. With any introduction of new technology, fear, uncertainty and doubt initially take over, but then, over time and overcoming those things, innovation happens.”

So, we reached out to certified professionals to find out whether they have begun to overcome that uncertainty and doubt to make way for innovation.

John Greene, SPHR, is the director of HR for the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), the largest civil rights organization working to achieve equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Americans. Greene said that his organization uses Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn for recruiting activities and branding and positioning the HRC.

“We’ve had some challenges with Facebook that we’ve learned from,” said Greene. “We’ve had people post things on personal Facebook pages that have come to my attention, and springboarding from those instances, we’ve created policies to educate our workforce in the most effective ways to use social media outlets. We created several examples of how to »
use it, depending on what your role is. For example, ‘Are you a spokesperson for the organization? Then it’s perfectly normal and acceptable for you to mention events that are going on or things we are trying to achieve.’

“If it’s your own Facebook page, because of First Amendment rights, you can mention things that are going on with the HRC, but as an advocate. You aren’t speaking on behalf of the organization, but you want people to know about us and what we are doing,” Greene explained. “The HR department worked with the administrative manager, our managing director and our inside legal counsel to create the policy. We got sample policies from other organizations and also worked with our outside counsel to create a policy specifically for the HRC.”

Greene also shared his thoughts on how technology offers insights into the use of technology in screening potential hires. “Because we live in a technological society, managers and sometimes even human resources will get resumes, and the first stop they will make is Google,” Greene explained. “They put in a name to see what comes up. It’s not invasive, because it’s public information. You’ll find out what people’s interests are and a little about their background. If you’re not a friend of theirs, you’re only going to get a little bit of information, but it gives some insight.

“Why people need to know that, I am not really sure,” Greene shared. “If it’s a candidate you’re interested in, you’re calling them in primarily because they meet the qualifications of the position you are looking to fill. I think anything else they bring to the position is extra and a plus.”

We also spoke with Tom Burgum, director of benefits for Gannett, a global media and marketing solutions company that includes national brands like USA TODAY and CareerBuilder. Burgum said that the company encourages its employees to use social media to have a full understanding of its value and power.

“Being a media company, social media is key to us both as a business and as a workforce, so we encourage employees to take advantage of that,” Burgum explained. “In addition to using social media as another distribution channel for news and information, we also provide marketing solutions that include search and social marketing campaigns. We utilize social media for corporate purposes to reach out to employees. We connect with both employees and candidates through social media because that’s how the younger generation wants to hear from us – on Twitter or Facebook. We’re happy to do that.”

Burgum said that while he isn’t directly involved in creating Gannett’s policy surrounding social media, companies should involve more than just the HR department when setting policies.

“A social media policy is likely owned by HR and managed in consultation with IT,” he said. “It’s no longer the days of silos, where department heads made decisions unilaterally and then just imposed them on the rest of the company. That doesn’t really work anymore, so I think HR needs to play a key role in managing a social media policy, but, certainly, IT needs to be involved and in agreement.”

Marianna Knight, senior director of HR for the National Trust for Historic Preservation, a privately funded nonprofit organization that works to save America’s historic places, agreed with that premise and explained how the Trust approaches the ever-changing social media landscape.

With 250 full-time employees and additional seasonal employees spread across the United States, the Trust uses social media for communication and outreach to employees and to the public.

“Tying together an increasingly disperse workforce has many different challenges. You have all these social media tools that can be used really effectively to keep people on the same page, but the downside is that maybe that then bleeds over into their personal Facebook page,” Knight said. “There are a lot of court cases right now looking at instances like that, so as an HR professional — and this is where certification really is helpful — it’s imperative to not only stay on top of the things that are evolving along those lines, but also to make sure that our organization is forward-thinking and current when we think about them.”

Knight explained that the Trust uses Skype to hold all-staff meetings, “We need to ask ourselves, ‘What tone should the organization be taking and what expectations, guidelines and rules should we be setting about how all these technologies are supposed to be used and when people are or are not supposed to use them?’

“For example, a big issue right now is your cell phone, and when is it okay to just start snapping photos of people in the workplace and when is it not? People get really creative sometimes, and sometimes that shows good judgment, and sometimes it’s like, ‘Wait a minute, you’ve gone too far.’” Knight continued.

Knight’s perspective is that the HR department should be very involved in setting policies that should be designed to be flexible as technology evolves and changes.

“As an HR professional, it’s important to think about those possible scenarios and try and come up with something that is fair, direct, clear, but that also addresses any potential downsides,” she explained. “Since so much of that is evolving so quickly, I think a lot of us are guessing, and we are working with our legal departments to come up with something that is tenable, but that we also recognize is not going to address everything and is going to have to be changed frequently depending on what happens in court cases and such.”

As technology and social media platforms evolve, HR departments will need to stay at the forefront and refrain from allowing fear to get in the way of trying new outlets and creating innovative ways for organizations to take advantage of fresh and improved ways to reach out to current and potential employees.
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NO EXCUSES HR: SOCIAL MEDIA + HEALTHCARE

Photo courtesy All Children’s Hospital

CERTIFIED June 2012
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Recently, Bryan Wempen and William Tincup, SPHR, hosts of DriveThruHR, a daily talk radio blog that focuses on HR, welcomed Jay Kuhns, SPHR, vice president of human resources at All Children’s Hospital in St. Petersburg, Florida.
As we talked about different options, one of the mantras that I have been starting to use is: “We’re going to try some things that work, and we’re going to try some things that don’t work, and I am not interested in blame.”
I just wanted to stop doing the things that don’t work. When we don’t worry about failing anymore, and all we’re worried about is trying new strategies and approaches, we can build on just the good parts. Now, we have simple things like a hashtag that we use for anything related to our posts or jobs or things like that. We are in very close collaboration with our marketing department, with which we’re completely integrated from a communication and strategy perspective, and we have been able to identify areas that need work, such as our jobs landing page.

As a result, we are working on a transformation of our careers website, which is very exciting, and integration into the talent community space. This is a huge opportunity for us, because I don’t think there are a lot of folks in healthcare getting very focused on talent communities. I may be wrong, but I just haven’t seen a whole lot. And how we leverage some of the tools like Foursquare and LinkedIn, some video use and Twitter, all of these pieces are coming together in a very seamless and coordinated way. At the end of the day, we are targeting 18- to 54-year olds, not only to make healthcare decisions for their kids, but also because they believe in our brand. They also are overwhelmingly the primary group that we’ll be recruiting. Since we have 83 percent females in our employee population who are very active in social media, we’re really shifting much of our energy and resources into that arena.

**Tincup:** How do you have the discussion around ROI? Because it’s simply very similar to some of the marketing discussions. You get a lot of people that are non-marketers who ask, “Okay, what’s the return on this?” In some things, there is a clear return. An email campaign, for example, is very easy to measure; redoing a logo is not so easy to measure. So how do you have those types of discussions throughout your organization around ROI, but also around the concept of fear of failure, if you will?**

**Kuhns:** One of the things that helped from an ROI perspective is that our marketing team has been recognized for many of their accomplishments and work product. We already have, as an organization, established the fact that these tools can be effective and that we have the internal expertise to manage them appropriately, and that helped pave the way for HR. As the HR group started forging our own path, we didn’t have to go completely blindly down the trail. We could almost piggyback on the good works that our marketing group had done. I mean, I’m literally in a weekly marketing meeting with them talking about HR projects, and they have a director from that team who is in my recruitment meetings. We are totally and completely integrated, and that’s helped us a lot on the ROI side.

Another area that’s helped us from an experiential perspective is that traditional kind of boring old print advertising has less and less of a return, particularly because we’re frequently looking for such specialized staff. That’s helped us be free to try new things, so

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**A lot of times people are nervous and risk-averse and they’re worried that the compliance person is going to swoop out of a tree and whack them on the head. I just don’t care or waste time worrying about that.**
when all the social media opportunities kicked in, we started pushing real hard right along with that. The fear part, I think, has a lot to do with many HR practitioners not having the guts to bring it up. Since we don’t have any of those fears, we’ve just been blazing a trail. A lot of times people are nervous and risk-averse and they’re worried that the compliance person is going to swoop out of a tree and whack them on the head. I just don’t care or waste time worrying about that.

Wempen: I was thinking about culture in engagement and how it applies, and what I hear and see, especially from your organization, is that it seems that everybody as an individual takes a back seat to the overall mission. I mean you’re singular of mission, and that’s to take care of the children.

Kuhns: Yes! Everyone is totally focused on our mission.

Wempen: I think that’s interesting. For example, for the first four months in any of the military branches, they strip away the individualism and thoughts about “What’s in it for me?” and they really instill that there is a bigger mission. There is something bigger than you, and you have to basically balance out. It’s not about you; it’s about everything around you and the overall goal or objective. And that bigger mission helps take away the, “What’s in it for me?” thoughts. That’s what I equated to the children’s hospital, and I would love to see other companies be able to establish a culture of having a mission bigger than themselves. I see that from some technology companies where they’re so immersed in culture that you know they’re part of that; they feel a part of it. Then I start to see that you don’t even talk about engagement after that. It’s really about, “How can we make things better? How can we have honest conversations? How do we forge ahead?”

Kuhns: I agree. That mission piece for us is maybe more unique than, say, heavy manufacturing or something like that. I can’t speak for those industries, because I’ve been a healthcare guy forever, but one of the things that I think has helped us with these strategies is that we have not simply said, “Oh, you should be thankful to be working in this amazing place where we do heart transplants on neonates and save lives every day.” That’s incredible, but that can’t be enough. One of the things that we took a long, hard look at when we were developing our social media guidelines was that we did not want another policy, because healthcare is full of policies. Plus they’re usually boring and dull and get in the way. So we put a team together to develop social media guidelines that encourage our employees to use it. It encourages them to be individuals, not just trapped in this giant homogenous team, but recognizes a level of difference within our workforce and encourages them to use the tools. We tell them how to use them properly, how to get in touch with the marketing department, how they can use them if they want to set up outside of the hospital. We make all of this available to them because we want to encourage them, and because part of our foundation around the strategy was this concept of employee voice.

Tincup: Let me tell everyone the social media policy dilemma. It’s three words: Use common sense. There you go. Take the policy. Have a nice day. So, Jay, I want to segue into your merger with Johns Hopkins. What have you learned as an HR leader, as an HR pro and as a person that’s really on point? What was the unintended learning through this merger process thing? What have you learned about yourself and on your team?

Kuhns: Well, we’re coming up on the one-year anniversary of our organization joining Johns Hopkins Medicine, and we are the first full member of the healthcare system that is so far away from the rest of the group. All of the other hospitals are in the Baltimore–D.C. metro area. And so, part of the buildup for us and excitement about it didn’t have a big bang right after it happened, because there was no dramatic change to the life of the employees. Some of the hospital’s executives have a much greater degree of interaction with the corporate staff in Baltimore, but by and large there had not been a lot of changes until recently, with our long-term CEO retiring and a member of the
Wempen: least give it a little thought. struggle with that, maybe the message is to at ineffective, if you ask me. So for folks who anymore at all in any way. And it is horribly leadership style, and that really doesn’t apply organizations are so involved in this controlling look at the world a little differently. Many and it’s been a way to, perhaps, help people to be any more inclined to dip their toe in the pretty well. I’m not sure that people are going on this is to be very aggressive and challenging might push too hard, because my whole angle decision makers. I get a little nervous that I recently, which had been more of a higher-level with the groups I have been speaking to about the topic because of that. Particularly people for some reason. I sense the anxiety [social media] seems to be so threatening to it awhile on a variety of topics, but this topic way. I love public speaking and have been doing any sort of glassware was being thrown my Kuhns: Well, I have not had to duck yet because any sort of glassware was being thrown my way. I love public speaking and have been doing it awhile on a variety of topics, but this topic [social media] seems to be so threatening to people for some reason. I sense the anxiety about the topic because of that. Particularly with the groups I have been speaking to recently, which had been more of a higher-level decision makers. I get a little nervous that I might push too hard, because my whole angle on this is to be very aggressive and challenging and have some fun with it, and so far it’s gone pretty well. I’m not sure that people are going to be any more inclined to dip their toe in the water, but it’s been a really good experience, and it’s been a way to, perhaps, help people look at the world a little differently. Many organizations are so involved in this controlling leadership style, and that really doesn’t apply anymore at all in any way. And it is horribly ineffective, if you ask me. So for folks who struggle with that, maybe the message is to at least give it a little thought. Wempen: So here’s a nugget that we can kind of identify. So, the first step is admit that you got a problem with the excuses in the organization as the HR team. So, what would be your second step on creating a “no excuses”-type culture in HR? Kuhns: I think the way that I get a “no excuses” culture in HR is by challenging over and over and over why would we do that. “Well, somebody told me four years ago we should do that.” Well, I don’t care. We’re not doing that anymore, is my answer. Let’s move past that, and the more we push and push and push, the more progress we make. For PuckHead Nation and all hockey fans out there, the Tampa Bay Lightning used to have a sign in the locker room that said “Safe is death.” That speaks to hockey games, and it speaks to careers, if you ask me. So, I’m not really interested in playing it safe, and I don’t mean that I’m a tough guy; I just mean that’s reality. Wempen: Well, then just keep going with that from like a mentoring angle because you do that a lot. How do you react when somebody on your team comes and says, “Jay, that’s great, I hear you, but I just really struggle with being uncomfortable with this. I want to push, but I’m wrapped in traditional HR, and I don’t want to make waves. I’m thinking it, but I can’t get it out of my mouth.” What do you tell them? Kuhns: That’s a fair question, and I’ve handled it two ways. One is, I help them. If they’re worried about something, I will run some interference with other leaders in the organization. That helps maybe break things up a little bit for them, and it helps clear the path for them to take a couple of steps forward. The other way I’ve done that is, when I have had vacancies on my team. I don’t hire people who aren’t willing to take risks and try new things; they’re just not going to be here because I only want people around me who are willing to take risks and go for it. Wempen: Good job of it. Get the right people on the bus, so you don’t turn too much anymore. Where can people connect with you on Twitter? Give them your blog name. Kuhns: Thank you, the Twitter is @jrkuhns. The blog is www.noexcuseshr.com, and I’m on LinkedIn and Foursquare. ■

O "DriveThruHR"
Dr. William Tincup and Bryan Wempen, SPHR, are the co-hosts of the DriveThruHR Show—HR’s #1 Internet radio show focusing on Human Capital Management/ Human Resources/Talent Management. They have interviewed more than 350 HR leaders and talk to them specifically about "what keeps them up at night!" During these conversations, Wempen and Tincup uncover some of the greatest challenges faced by HR professionals today.

Wempen, founder of the show, is the chief strategy officer at PeopleClues, a global assessment provider specializing in making the candidate experience and HR technology applications better. Tincup is CEO of Tincup & Co., and is one of the country’s leading thinkers on social media application for human resources and an expert on adoption of HR technology.
Success Through Experience

Andrea Haggard-Caine Reti, GPHR, is proving that HR success can be achieved through multiple channels.

By Archana Mehta

Andrea Haggard-Caine Reti, GPHR, is the managing partner of Haggard Caine Consultoria, a human resources consulting company in Brazil, part of the HRLAN network. She consults with national and global companies in the areas of HR strategy, Manpower Planning, Performance Management and Rewards.

Prior to opening her own firm, she was a partner at Hewitt Associates, where she was the country manager for Brazil and headed the HR strategy and mergers and acquisitions consulting practice for the Latin American Region.

Reti has a GPHR certification from the HR Certification Institute. She is a member of the ABRH Brazilian Human Resources Association, where she is the director for professional certification, as well as in the Content Committee for the CONARH, the second largest HR congress in the world.

Reti is the author of “O segredo de cuidar das pessoas; experiências do cotidiano para gerenciar melhor as pessoas.” The secret to taking care of people: Taking ideas from everyday experiences to improve people management skills.

Andrea Haggard-Caine Reti has proven that learning by experience can be just as valuable as going the more traditional college route.

Reti didn’t have a college degree in 1981 when she first started working in HR — and now she’s been tapped as the director of professional certification for the Brazilian Association of Human Resources (Associação Brasileira de Recursos Humanos), ABRH, an organization whose mission is to promote human resources, the development of the profession and the dissemination of HR knowledge in Brazil.

So how did Reti achieve such high acclaim in a country of some 200 million people? Through hard work, continuous self-learning and business savvy.

After working in the hotel sector — with roles that had nothing to do with HR — her mother introduced her to her first HR job, working at Citibank. At the time, Reti didn’t have a college degree, but it didn’t matter: She could circumvent the requirement because of her work experience, allowing her to enter via the HR training program.

After working at Citibank offices in Brazil and Italy, Reti advanced to HR manager for the bank and continued to build her expertise in the financial sector and its interaction with HR policies.

In a phone interview from São Paulo, Reti commented, “One of the interesting things I learned when working internationally is that it is very important to understand the culture, history, fiscal and political environment of a country to understand the drivers of local HR practices.”

Finishing an eight-year tenure at the bank, Reti decided it was time to go out on her own and move back to Brazil. She started her own HR consulting firm, focusing on the niche area of compensation policies for bank employees.

Reti said that in Brazil, companies grant larger and more aggressive benefits packages to employees in senior level positions, including company car plans. “Because of the way employment laws, Social Security and our tax systems are designed, this is a more cost-effective way to provide total compensation.”

As Reti advanced in her consulting career, she eventually expanded her client portfolio to include strategic advice on aligning HR practices and programs to business strategies like performance management, manpower planning, variable pay, flexible benefits management and succession planning.

Reti, 52, attributes her HR success to being very data driven and constantly staying updated on business trends.

“I received the best advice many years ago from a very senior consultant,” said Reti. “He said, ‘If you want to be seen as strategic, you have to read about strategy, the elements that influence strategy and the trends that can impact these.’”

When connecting with business managers, Reti’s first questions are always “Tell me about your business. How do you make money and measure success? What is your competitive advantage?” Reti says once she understands these metrics, it becomes easier to understand the HR practices that must be designed.

“Additionally, I am always looking for data — be it demographics, financial or other — to provide credence to the suggestions I provide my clients,” said Reti.

To further prove her credibility, Reti decided to pursue the Global Professional in Human Resources (GPHR®) certification. She credits the GPHR with being able to sell her HR credentials to companies.

Reti also says that certification will be important for the advancement of HR professionals in Brazil.

“Universities currently do not offer formal programs for HR and because there are so many moving parts with HR, there is no way to figure out all the pieces, compensation, benefits, training, etc.”

Now, as director of professional certification for ABRH, Reti plans to focus on analyzing and evaluating existing international certifications that most closely align with HR policies and practices in Brazil. The project has been under study for a few years, but now with Reti at the helm, ABRH hopes to offer one of these certifications to its members this year.
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Think Strategically

Building and executing HR strategy that aligns with overall business goals is crucial to the success of any organization. Holly Kortright has been putting that theory into practice for years and has a history of achievement to prove it.

By Holly Kortright
To be a true strategic business partner to executives, the HR department must take a business-oriented approach to the human capital side of the organization. From speaking the language of your company leaders to understanding the need for growth and education, an effective HR leader will gain respect and can bring positive change to the business.

As a CHRO, it is critical to think and act in the best interest of the business. At my company, we do financial reporting on a quarterly basis. In addition, every department has to submit a forecast every two weeks about where it stands against its quarterly revenue, margin and profitability goals. We have to dynamically track all of this and make adjustments, sometimes in real-time.

From an HR and human capital standpoint, we have to look at labor, recruiting and management costs...who we are hiring, how much they cost, whether they are focused on the correct priorities, etc. We also need to ensure that we leverage our talent across our business units, and this constant cycle of review allows us to determine if we have the right people in the right places, or if we have gaps to fill.

Understanding how to evaluate human capital and how it affects the business is a vital skill, particularly in companies like software firms where labor costs can represent 60 percent of total costs. Because our people are such a large part of our expense structure, senior leaders take a great interest in forecasting and ability business goals and cultural alignment.

**Strategic Business Partner/Teacher**

Skyrocketing growth and company transformation can pose great risk for a company in all areas, from Sales, Finance and Facilities to HR. When they occur at the same time, the risk for missteps and miscues, from forecasting earnings to ensuring that new employees have a desk at which to work, is even greater.

At one company I worked for, we were experiencing massive growth and taking on larger customers than we had ever taken on before. While we were growing, we also were transforming from a locally prominent, family-run organization to a global, publicly-held company. That was the challenge. There was little infrastructure in place that would allow the company to go public in a year and withstand its regulatory requirements and scrutiny that comes with being a public organization. It really was about how do you transform this organization?

I have found myself in a situation once or twice in which the company was in growth mode, which is a great place to be and a wonderful environment to work in, but sometimes you can get ahead of yourself. Simultaneously, you need to get consultants on board, you need to hire sales reps, you need to meet the customer demands and you want to achieve those growth and revenue targets that you have set out for the business.... and you
need to do it all without creating chaos.

Sometimes when you are in growth mode and you are so excited about bringing new talent on board you can grow your infrastructure faster than the business delivers on the revenue side. You bring in the headcount that you think you are going to need, the talent you will need to deliver against the growth, and you build up the corporate staff groups (HR, Finance, Marketing, IT, etc.) to bolster support before the revenue actually comes in. It is a balancing act between people and revenue.

This is a big challenge because you are moving fast in a growth environment and you want to deliver, and you don’t want to be short the staff or resources needed to deliver on the revenue.

This timing and balancing act is hard to perfect, but one of my jobs is to understand where the business is going in the future and partner with the business leaders to look at their workforces and systems analytically. We look at our cost structure to see what is needed to support the business, recognizing that we will have to grow in pockets.

We always try to make decisions in terms of what’s best in the long-term and still deliver the financials in the short-term. You sometimes need to call a time-out to look at that, manage that, balance that effectively while also engaging talent in the growth of the company.

Managing Change

One of the biggest challenges in moving from a private business to a publicly held company is honoring the success that the company realized to get it to this position and preserving the success that employees had with customers. This, however, isn’t as easy as it may sound. I suggest a multipronged approach to achieving this goal.

First, I suggest looking for best practices that have worked locally and leveraging them globally. This demonstrates that we’re serious about respecting individual contributions and recognizing that a lot of people did a lot of great work to get us to this point. This can help soften resistance to changes you may then ask people to make.

Second, I recommend building a competency model and performance management process to align employees to the business strategy and goals. This includes an evaluation process which sets employee goals/expectations, feedback and even compensation. This enables you to create an accepted common language in which to discuss, evaluate, monitor and align performance.

With leadership support, we leverage the competency model and performance management process to define and discuss business priorities and what’s important for business development, to increase revenue and to drive organizational alignment. We also educate employees so they will understand how their jobs fit into the larger picture and align themselves with business priorities so that we are all rowing in the same direction.

Through creating these key human capital processes and our systematic review of the business forecasts and results, we discovered that some employees were focused on individual products that were not driving the most revenue. At the same time, the amount of time and energy spent on different customer segments was not aligned to revenue and profitability.

We had to analyze our customers and products from a return-on-investment standpoint and segment our customers based on revenue and profitability. This transformation happened over years, not months, and it came about as a result of information sharing: getting people to understand that there were different ways to satisfy every customer. We have made great progress in balancing customers’ needs, the needs of the business, available resources and profitability.

Managing Human Capital: Leveraging High Performance Across an Organization

As one of the CEO’s key strategic advisors, I am relied upon to know the pulse of the talent, what is going on, the morale of our employees and the impact of morale on the company. The CEO relies on me to help manage the talent — the human capital — to make sure we have the right talent for where we need to go and to make sure that we are managing performance effectively.

We work with all levels of employees across the organization to understand the definition of a “high performer” and what made them high performing and successful. We study these high performers to understand what key behaviors made them successful. This helps us develop key behavior anchors for each level in the organization to define what meets expectations, what exceeds, what is considered exemplary at each level — at VP, director, manager and individual contributor.

Getting buy-in on the organizational and behavioral anchors in the competency model is important. We included a sample of employees from across the company in building this, so a lot of people had been exposed to this before we got to the point where we were ready to communicate it and roll it out.

These “model” behaviors must begin with the talent on the executive team. In some cases, members of the executive team will be willing to adopt these behaviors and some will not. Some will embrace rapid growth and transformation, and adapt and mature with the organization and others can’t, or simply won’t, adapt. Those who don’t adapt must occasionally be replaced, and sometimes that can be a hard decision; but it’s key to future success and ultimately the right decision for both the team and the individual.
Communication and Education

The key to success with any change in an organization is gaining senior executive buy-in, so that what you are trying to accomplish isn’t seen as a forced HR activity. In my experience, it was critical to be able to demonstrate that change is a business-led initiative for the purposes of moving the business forward. I always seek executives to be the sponsors of major human capital changes that are rolled out across the organization and ask them to pilot initiatives in their organizations first. This enables us to leverage learnings and show that these changes are critical for business success.

For every human capital strategic change, there is always an education, coaching and communication aspect that is required for success. It starts with one-on-one conversations with the CEO and other senior leaders and then driving those messages throughout the organization. To that end, we develop a massive education and communications plan around our key changes that leaders can leverage.

The Human Side of Strategic HR

What I have also learned over the years, is that you can have strong business acumen and deliver operational results, but that is not enough to be a Strategic Business Partner to your CEO and leaders in the company. Your peers want a partner in HR who will support them in their goals and help them with their people challenges. I strive to be a trusted advisor and confident who can coach them to grow as leaders and support them in finding the right solutions for transforming their own organizations. And I feel extremely passionate about the business and the people in the organization who rely on me to “do the right thing.”

I hold myself to a high standard in being open, honest and candid with my peers while building trusting relationships that enable us all to achieve great results for our business and in growing our talent. In the CHRO role, you need to be the “heart and soul” of the organization even when that might not be a popular voice to be heard at a given moment in time. The constant balancing of business and people needs is critical to achieve success.

Holly Kortright, senior vice president of Human Resources, leads Deltek’s global human resources team delivering innovative, best-in-class programs. She oversees the Human Capital Management, including Deltek University, recruiting, compensation and benefits, talent management and development, performance management, internal communications, acquisition integration, philanthropy and administration. With 20 years of experience in leading human resource initiatives for several world-class organizations, Kortright brings strong leadership skills in human resources, consulting and organizational development to Deltek’s executive leadership team.
THETES FROM ACROSS THE GLOBE aren't the only ones gearing up for this summer's Olympic Games in London. Pam Sawyer is, too.

As the world prepares for the London 2012 Olympic Games, the U.S. Olympic Committee (USOC) staff is methodically working to ensure every U.S. athlete is ready for his or her turn in the international spotlight. For Sawyer, the managing director of human resources at the USOC, that means she must ensure HR programs are meeting the USOC's strategic vision, the right people are being hired and policies are in place to help carry out all the work that goes into an enormously complex 16-day event.

“During a Games year, the pace of our work is incredibly fast, and the time to execute upon our work is highly compressed,” says Sawyer. “We complete one year's worth of work in 10 months.”

It’s not an easy task.

Sawyer says employees prepare for the rigorous Games years during the off years. This past year, the USOC leadership team gave all regular benefits employees three extra days' time off to allow employees to rest, spend time with family and energize during the holidays and before the start of this Games year.

Sawyer, who joined the USOC in January 2009 as the director of HR, has seen her role grow during her three-year tenure. Now she oversees all HR programs and functions within the organization, including building the organization, grooming and recruiting fresh talent, developing compensation and benefits policies, addressing employee relations and ensuring USOC policies and procedures and diversity are being adhered to appropriately.

The USOC employs approximately 450 full- and part-time staff and provides three training centers in Chula Vista, Calif., Lake Placid, N.Y., and the largest center in Colorado Springs, Colo., for athletes. Servicing the athletes at the training centers and the various USOC-sanctioned games and events is no minor feat.

Founded in 1894 and headquartered in Colorado Springs, the USOC serves as both the National Olympic Committee and National Paralympic Committee for the United States and is responsible for training, registering and funding U.S. teams.

Sawyer says that in any given year, there are more than 40 USA sports, known as National Governing Bodies (NGBs), that interact with the USOC. The USOC partners with these NGBs, and
provides assistance when needed, in the form of monetary support through grants or services, access to living in the training centers and fundraising. In addition, the USOC provides NGBs with exposure through its website and other media channels.

But those aren’t the only challenges. Employees work across the three USOC sites where many athletes live year-round, and there are scores of athletes from all over the world visiting the facilities throughout the year. That forces the USOC to respond to a unique set of problems, like ensuring that international athletes who participate at events at an Olympic Training Center have purchased health insurance for their stay in the United States.

Moreover, escalating healthcare costs, the new healthcare law and proposed healthcare state exchanges can make benefits decisions more difficult, she says. In addition, countries like China are heavily investing financially to build their Olympic and Paralympic talent, a move that has created increased competition with the United States, whose government does not fund its national Olympic team.

Each USOC training facility is also free to visitors, so the USOC ramps up staff to accommodate needs for tours and additional athletes in the dorms seasonally. And because the USOC is a non-profit, much of the talent needed to support the training centers and Olympic events is sourced through the influx of volunteers recruited to work before, during and after the Games.

“The USOC needs staff onsite in London to continue to support the athletes,” Sawyer says.

“For example, in London we are creating a high performance training center for our athletes,” she adds. “If an athlete arrives on the first day of the Games but does not compete until the last week, the U.S. creates space for the athletes to train and provides staff and volunteers to man the location.”

Typically, staff members who attend the Games are chosen by the USOC. However, Sawyer says that this year the USOC created approximately 15 positions for existing staff to apply to work at the Games. Sawyer’s team created the system to allow interested parties the opportunity to formally apply and interview for the open Games positions, allowing for a larger applicant pool and making the process more transparent.

Sawyer seems well-suited to deliver for the London Games, given her breadth of experience in the HR field.

Sawyer’s career began in Atlanta, where she worked in human resources for Turner Broadcasting before moving to The Weather Channel and weather.com. Three years ago, she was offered an opportunity to come to the USOC, moving to Colorado Springs.

A marketing major in college, Sawyer graduated and landed a position as the VP of Personnel’s executive assistant at Turner Broadcasting. She decided to stay in HR for a number of reasons, including her connection with a mentor, Bill Shaw.

“During the 1980s, when I arrived, Turner was experiencing a time of change,” says Sawyer. “I saw the HR department evolving from just focusing on issues like compliance and regulation [Personnel], to becoming more of a strategic business partner and offering programs for retention, robust recruitment programs and employee engagement to drive the business.”

But one of things that has not changed over the years are the fundamental values stated in the Olympic Charter, which states the Games are played “at the service of the harmonious development of humankind, with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity.”

The USOC training centers create just that: an environment for athletes from different sports and different countries to train together and trade information, build lasting friendships and develop well-rounded athletes, according to Sawyer.

“We will need to figure out how to reinvent ourselves to maintain a level of competitive excellence,” says Sawyer. “The competition is going to get tougher, and we need to get smarter and more innovative to find and provide the support necessary to grow our athletes and allow them to remain at their competitive best.”

Pam Sawyer is the managing director of human resources for the U.S. Olympic Committee. Working with USOC CEO Scott Blackmun and the senior leadership team, Sawyer is responsible for the people and talent strategies that drive organizational effectiveness and high performance—which, in turn, leads the development of a world-class organization in support of world-class athletes. As part of her role, Sawyer is the functional leader overseeing all HR programs and systems within the USOC, including organizational development, talent development, compensation and benefits, talent acquisition, HR information systems, USOC policies and procedures, diversity and employee relations.

Sawyer first joined the USOC in January 2009 as director of HR. Previously, she worked for The Weather Channel, Inc. in Atlanta, Ga., from 2000-08. Sawyer held multiple roles at The Weather Channel, including HR manager, vice president of HR and director organizational development and diversity. While at The Weather Channel, she created and implemented a successful diversity strategy, led succession planning, created employee resources groups, developed retention strategies for high potential employees and re-launched and grew an internal mentoring program.

Prior to The Weather Channel, Sawyer served from 1993-95 as an HR manager for Turner International, Inc. in London, and then as an HR director/consultant from 1995-2000 at Turner Entertainment Networks in Atlanta.

She has a bachelor’s degree in Business Administration/Marketing from the University of Georgia.

Courtesy of www.usoc.org

www.HRCI.org

Photo courtesy of U.S. Olympic Committee

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Talent Development and Acquisition is a make-or-break success factor for those organizations leading the way in business innovation. HR leaders have the upper hand and are uniquely positioned to make an ROI difference in this kind of business strategy.

This means a clarion call for both recruiting top-tier performers and developing those HR leaders who are eager, understand business rules and have the capacity to take on challenges.

Bringing in high-level managers with an innovation mindset can challenge the best organization dynamics, requiring the rewiring of business processes and disrupting the status quo among the senior leadership team, but so much is at stake it is well worth the investment.

Thinkpiece:
HR as Business Leader

HR’s responsibility to recruit and develop the right team of leaders is critical to business success—shirk it at your peril.

By Seth Kahan
HR can help with this rewiring, but it can also be the disruptor that triggers the need for internal change. That doesn’t mean it shouldn’t be done. On the contrary, now is the time to do it. HR’s time has come as a business leader in every sense of the word.

Just 20 years ago, in the early ’90s, Chief Information Officer (CIO) was considered a third-tier title at best. Most CIOs were mired in arcane technology with a simple mandate: Just keep things running and don’t screw up finance. IT was considered by most to be a necessary evil to help the numbers team. Never at that time would a CIO direct or develop organizational strategy.

But all of that changed in the next decade. With the rise of dot-coms came myriad applications that influenced every part of the organization — from budget to procurement, from project supervision to data analysis. And, of course, IT became the primary way that companies interfaced with their most important stakeholder, the customer. Soon the CIO was directing from below so the organizational leadership shifted to include a CIO at the top.

By 2008 more than one-third of organizations have the CIO reporting directly to the CEO with as many as 46 percent in some sectors such as business services. With the rise of knowledge work, information is at a premium. Data mining and market analysis drive the strategy and tactics of worldwide organizations.

As global, decentralized, multicultural companies compete, IT systems are differentiators in the enterprise’s arsenal. Today the CIO is at the top and will stay there for the foreseeable future.

Along the same vein, HR was once thought of as the hiring, orientation and birthday party crew — but not anymore, not in today’s interconnected, globally competitive world.

Smart organizations are realizing that strategic talent recruitment and human capital development are the new differentiators, giving them the edge when it comes to innovation. As a consequence, bringing HR to the senior strategy team is gaining currency.

Seth Kahan is a trusted advisor to over 60 CEOs and author of the bestseller, Getting Change Right: How Leaders Transform Organizations from the Inside Out. He has written for Fast Company, the Washington Post, and American Express OPEN Forum. This article is an excerpt of his coming book, Getting Innovation Right, due out January 2013.
Hosetta Coleman, SPHR

Hosetta Coleman, SPHR, senior vice president and director of HR for Fifth Third Bank, Tampa Bay, recently was named one of Tampa Bay’s Top 30 African-American and Latino Executives in Power Broker Magazine.

Coleman has been certified since May 4, 2002, and holds a bachelor of science in Business Administration from Tuskegee University and her master’s in Business Administration from the University of Phoenix. She has more than 25 years of banking experience, 21 of which have been in strategic HR management functions.

Coleman lives in Tampa and founded Tampa Bay’s National Association of African Americans in Human Resource (NAAAHR) Chapter and is still actively involved in the organization. She is a previous board member of the Centre for Women, Inroads and Tampa Bay Committee for the Arts. She currently serves on the National Board for Alpha Kappa Alpha and was recently selected as a member of the Florida A&M University Foundation Board of Directors.

In her HR role at Fifth Third Bank, Coleman has played a key role in increasing diversity and is committed to ensuring that her workplace reflects the community at all levels.

Certified: What do you define as your “expertise” in HR?
Hosetta Coleman: I am very focused on strategic workforce planning, diversity strategies and execution. I am often called upon to provide developmental coaching for all levels of employees.

C: How did you decide to become involved in human resources?
HC: Human resources actually found me. I was a frequent user of HR and valued their guidance. The HR director recommended me to replace her during maternity leave because [she said] I always had good solutions when I presented situations to her.

C: Has your certification provided opportunities for you that may not have otherwise come your way? Why did you decide to become certified, and was your certification a prerequisite for your current position?
HC: The certification process was definitely a value add to my professional tool box. I met peers during the preparation process with whom I still have relationships and utilize as resources. We are from a variety of industries and that helped to broaden my perspective on numerous topics. I decided to obtain my certification to increase options for job opportunities. During the time I initially certified, many positions listed certification as a requirement.

In addition, certification exposed me to many areas of expertise that I did not handle on a day-to-day basis. I definitely learned a lot and continue to learn as I recertify.

C: Do you think that certification “shows” anything about other HR professionals, your colleagues or employees in terms of how they work?
HC: Certification has enhanced the strategic focus that my peer colleagues use in addressing many issues faced in our profession. It also helps shift your paradigm from many learned or systemic behaviors to encourage you to always be curious and not settle for surface solutions.

C: What traits do certified professionals have that you don’t see in others?
HC: In my opinion, certified professionals are very proud of their chosen career paths and, in many cases, are able to operate in situations without clear directions because of their expanded depth of knowledge.

C: When you work with certified professionals from other organizations, do you notice anything different about how they conduct their work?
HC: Certification provides an immediate connection between me and others who hold it. Also, in many instances, I find that other certified professionals are knowledgeable outside of their specific industry.

IN THE NEWS

We love to hear great news about our certified HR professionals, and we give them kudos several times a month in our Certification Matters blog on www.HRCI.org.

If you hold a PHR®, an SPHR®, GPHR® or California Certification and want to share your great news with fellow certificants, send an email to Margaret.Brown@HRCI.org with a link to your announcement.
Conclusion: 
The Complexity of HR

Sometimes what is absent from a data set is as interesting as what is present. One intriguing absence in this case was technical and traditional HR skills. I could not identify in the data HR-specific themes. No one said, for instance, that young HR professionals should become benefits experts or fully understand relevant employment legislation.

Of course, that hardly means that HR-specific topics and knowledge are not important. Instead, one might logically consider these to be *sine qua non* conditions to the practice of HR. In other words: Someone cannot be an HR professional without understanding the HR lingo, laws and practices. However, that same person will not rise to true business partnership without learning other languages, such as marketing, production and finance. No wonder we are called to continuously learn; it certainly takes more than a single degree to cover the knowledge expected of an HR professional.

As I finish this article, I turn once again to the young woman I was early in my career. What would happen if I could go back? Would I change my path? Would I do anything differently?

Thankfully, I will not have the luxury of a second chance. Life is lived but once, mistakes and all. After all, any changes in my path would also have changed beautiful gifts I received along the way, including my daughter Maggie. The good news: We forge unique career trails from our mistakes. My unusual career choices taught me valuable business lessons (I was a sales trainer, an entrepreneur and an international literary agent) and even allowed me to take a fascinating detour into the world of performing arts (I have an additional master’s degree in Vocal Pedagogy). Further, the battles I fought to find my professional niche helped me understand the value of fit and employee engagement — my current research foci.

Here is, therefore, the final advice I would give young Cris: It’s all okay. This year shall pass. You will eventually become a professor and a researcher and love what you do. You will gain valuable skills this year, including one that will fill your future academic colleagues with envy.

You will be able to type a zillion words a minute. ■

**References**


Dr. Cristina Wildermuth is an assistant professor for Drake University’s master of science in Adult Learning and Organizational Performance program, where she teaches graduate courses in human resources management, instructional design, adaptive leadership and research. Dr. Wildermuth is the group leader and the lead editor of LinkedHR, a Linkedin human resources community with over 600,000 members worldwide. Her main research, keynote speaking and consulting interests include employee engagement, personality diversity and business ethics. She welcomes comments to this article at Cris.Wildermuth@Drake.edu or at www.criswildermuth.com.
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GLOBAL TOUCH: Culture Technology and HR
I am proud of my certifications and as a “life-long learner” I will continue to recertify them through the remainder of my career.

Javier Lozano, SPHR-CA, GPHR

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