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HRCI Practice Analysis for PHR and SPHR Certifications Reveals Greater HR Emphasis on Employee Experience, Data-Driven Decisions and Business Results

HR Certification Institute Updates Key HR Functional Areas for US-Based Professionals; Changes Effective for PHR and SPHR Exams Taken on or After August 1, 2018

ALEXANDRIA, Va., January 16, 2018 U.S.-based human resource management practices are quickly transforming and growing more complex. Senior-level HR professionals play expanded roles in the strategic advancement of business outcomes. All HR professionals are also asked to help champion employee engagement and to support improved business decisions with data-driven analytics.

HR professionals who seek to earn the Professional in Human Resources® (PHR®) or Senior Professional in Human Resources® (SPHR®), the nation's most recognized HR credentials from HR Certification Institute® (HRCI®), will soon see these expanded areas of responsibility and knowledge on their certification exams.

"Today's HR practices require more holistic strategies – not just HR strategies – that drive people, innovation and, ultimately, business outcomes through customer delight."

HRCI today published the [2018 PHR Exam Content Outline](#) and the [2018 SPHR Exam Content Outline](#), defining the current state of key HR functional areas and competencies required of professional and senior-level practitioners. The exam content outlines are the result of a rigorous 2017 practice analysis study, in compliance with certification industry standards, to identify current HR practice in the United States. While a practice analysis is performed periodically for all HRCI credentials, exam content is frequently updated by HR experts to reflect changes in practice and compliance.

In addition to defining HR functional areas, the 2018 exam content outlines also highlight the framework for the new PHR and SPHR exams that candidates will be required to pass, effective August 1, 2018, to earn one of these credentials.

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"The practice analysis reveals that today's HR professionals must be change agents who are 100 percent integrated into the business," said Amy Dufrane, Ed.D., SPHR, CAE, the CEO of HRCI. "Today's HR practices require more holistic strategies — not just HR strategies — that drive people, innovation and, ultimately, business outcomes through customer delight."

The [2018 PHR Exam Content Outline](#) reflects greater emphasis on the HR professional's role in the employee experience as well as the business decision-making process and use of data to make well-informed decisions. It outlines five functional areas for HR practitioners in management or professional-level roles: *Business Management, Talent Planning and Acquisition, Learning and Development, Total Rewards, and Employee and Labor Relations.*

The [2018 SPHR Exam Content Outline](#) reflects an increased emphasis on a senior HR professional's responsibility for developing workforce strategies that are aligned with desired business outcomes. Its five functional areas are *Leadership and Strategy, Talent Planning and Acquisition, Learning and Development, Total Rewards, and Employee Relations and Engagement.*

HRCI exam content outlines provide a mirror of the changes in HR practice over time, including the impact of new legislation, the emergence of new business practices, technological innovation and social factors.

"Those who earn a PHR or SPHR are not only assessed based on their expertise, but also their ability to anticipate and respond to these shifts," said Dania Eter, Chief of Global Certification and Products for HRCI. "HRCI credentials and the exams are regularly updated following industry standards to maintain relevancy, and only the HR certifications from HRCI are accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA)."

Please visit the [2018 PHR and SPHR Exam Content Outlines FAQ](#) webpage for more information about the development of the new exam content outlines.

About HRCI

The HR Certification Institute® (HRCI®) mission, helping people and organizations perform better, grows out of a more than 40-year commitment to certification rigor and continuous learning excellence aimed at advancing global HR practices. Just as HRCI has earned its standing as the premier HR certification organization, HRCI-certified professionals have earned reputations for possessing the skills and knowledge needed to mitigate workplace risks and enhance people-driven business results. The HRCI suite of seven fully accredited credentials includes the PHR® and SPHR® for HR professionals, and the aPHR™ for students, early-career HR professionals and non-HR managers, and international certification options. Learn more about HRCI credentials and group certification programs at <https://www.hrci.org>.