



SHRMTM

SOCIETY FOR HUMAN
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Choose a Career. Choose HR.

2008 Careers in Human Resources

www.shrm.org

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About SHRM

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) is the world's largest professional association devoted to human resource management. Our mission is to serve the needs of HR professionals by providing the most current and comprehensive resources, and to advance the profession by promoting HR's essential, strategic role. Founded in 1948, SHRM represents more than 225,000 individual members in over 125 countries, and has a network of more than 575 affiliated chapters in the United States, as well as offices in China and India. Visit SHRM at www.shrm.org.



Careers in Human Resources

Are you considering human resource management as a career choice? Wise decision! Not only do HR professionals contribute to business viability and success through the strategic management of human capital, but the profession itself continues to increase its stature as a career choice, pursued by many in today's ever-changing, competitive marketplace. In fact, in 2007, *MONEY Magazine* and Salary.com researched hundreds of jobs and ranked Human Resource Manager as number four on its list of the Top Ten Best Jobs in America based on a variety of factors, including job growth in the next decade, earnings potential, creativity and flexibility.

This booklet strives to give you an overview of the profession, provides pathways for you to consider a career in HR, gives you guidance with regard to deciding to become an HR professional and discusses a very important career booster—pursuing a formal education in human resources. It also gives you an overview of the types of professional positions available so you can make the best career choice for your interests, knowledge, skills and abilities.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROFESSION

Human resource management (HRM) is a term used to describe a set of tasks aimed at effectively managing an organization's employees, commonly known as its human resources or human capital. HRM professionals oversee the business of managing people in an organization which includes compensation, benefits, training and development, staffing, strategic HR management and other functions. HR practitioners structure staffing programs to recruit and retain the best employees by making the company competitive in terms of its attractiveness to potential candidates, so that they will choose to accept a position with and remain working for an employer. In today's competitive environment, human capital management is critically important to remain viable in the global marketplace. As a result, HR plays a pivotal role in the world—because people are truly the only thing that differentiates one business from another. Organizations may replicate processes, materials and structures of other successful organizations, but only the talent of an organization makes it unique and distinguishes it from all its competitors.

Pathways to a Career in HR

HR is a key component of any organization's senior management team. Though the human resources department is widely known for conducting interviews, explaining company benefits, managing employee relations, providing career development advice and helping hiring managers with performance and productivity expectations, the profession has a much larger role in business today. HR professionals have evolved from the behind-the-scenes administrative role of the 20th century to active involvement in shaping corporate policy. Senior management recognizes the significant contributions of HR to their organization's bottom line and overall success. This shift continues in the profession. To a more significant extent than ever before, many HR roles are consequently focused equally on contributing strategically and functionally to manage the organization's talent. This booklet highlights the various pathways you may choose in order to pursue the career in HR that best meets your needs. It is also important to note that HR professionals often progress to higher levels in an organization—and a career in HR can lead to a position as CEO.



HR Professionals' Key Duties and Challenges

Numerous varied challenges confront HR professionals, who must be capable of handling situations that arise daily in the workplace. If you choose HR as your profession, patience and flexibility will be necessary as you interact with people of widely differing levels of experience, intelligence, emotional intelligence, education, knowledge, skills and abilities. In the early stages of your career, you also will be involved in compliance-related work that demands close attention to detail, a strong knowledge of business and well-developed communication skills. From the strategic viewpoint, when setting policies and practices, you will be the “voice of management” to the employees. You will also be called upon to act as an advocate for employees to management, to ensure their viewpoint is represented. As a supporter of both the business and the people perspectives, diplomacy is a must. Sound judgment, good listening skills and tact are essential—as are influencing skills, the ability to link people strategies with business strategies, and the ability to prove the value that human capital adds to the organization’s bottom line.

An HR Career Booster: Pursuing a Formal HR Education

Because of these issues, it is important to get started in the profession on sound footing. Pursuing a formal HR education is becoming increasingly important in today’s competitive job market. This increased demand for knowledgeable HR professionals prompted the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) to consider the type of guidance it provides to those considering HR as a profession—and the type of formal education one should undertake in order to be appropriately prepared to become an HR professional.

Consequently, and as a result of a multi-year, multi-method research project, SHRM developed its *HR Curriculum Guidebook and Templates* to encourage universities to standardize HR education requirements. SHRM’s research engaged students, faculty and practitioners to establish these minimum standards, and the resulting

"Grow, learn, change and evolve! Never let yourself get comfortable in one functional role—purposely seek out breadth and depth in academic endeavors and career pursuits. This approach developed my business acumen, sharpened my human resource competencies and took me on a journey from entry-level generalist at a *Fortune 500* company to chief human resource officer for one of the largest nonprofit agencies in North America."

Fernán R. Cepero, PHR
Vice President & Chief
Human Resource Officer
The YMCA of Greater
Rochester

guides reflect the importance of obtaining HR education taught in a formal business context. The research also confirmed that educational requirements for a career in human resources vary widely depending on the university offering the program. SHRM's guides were developed to bring commonality to HR degree programs.

SHRM strongly suggests that undergraduates pursue a balanced curriculum that includes the behavioral sciences, social sciences, and the liberal arts. Courses that develop oral and written communication skills are equally essential. But most important, HR students should study business—economics, general business, business and labor law, accounting, marketing, management and statistics (also known as quantitative methods). Any additional coursework undertaken to meet the greater technical demands of specialties within human resources for example, compensation and benefits, should be taught with a business focus and business or policy application of the functional area of knowledge.

Just as general management careers can be greatly enhanced with graduate degrees, so can those in the field of HR management. Master's degrees in human resource management—whether a Master of Science in HR with coursework in industrial relations, organizational development, organizational behavior or other specialty, or a Master of Business Administration with a concentration in HR—are a vital part of preparation for an increasingly complex marketplace. *SHRM's HR Curriculum Guidebook and Templates* includes information on the HR topics you should study at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. These HR content areas, when taught with a focus on HR competencies and business or policy applications in the workplace, prepare you for the challenges you will encounter daily as an HR professional.

CHOOSING A UNIVERSITY PROGRAM

Extensive information about SHRM's guidebook is available online at www.shrm.org/hreducation. This web site also includes a list of the university programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels that align with SHRM's suggested minimum standards for HR education.

Other noteworthy resources are available online to help you select the program that best meets your needs and educational plans. The SHRM Foundation has also compiled directories of both graduate and undergraduate programs in human resource management. To view these directories online, browse www.shrm.org/foundation/. Please note: SHRM does not rank, accredit or recommend specific university programs.

Another rich resource of schools offering programs in HR can be found online at www.petersons.com. The printed *Peterson's Guide to Colleges & Universities* is also available in most libraries and bookstores. For an additional list of HR programs, visit www.gradschools.com.



Internships in HR

"I started in HR as an unpaid intern and immediately began building a professional network. By seeking professional growth opportunities, pursuing a variety of positions within the profession, and leveraging network contacts, I was able to rely on resources and opportunities to secure a position as a regional manager with a multi-national organization."

Neal Summers, PHR
Regional Manager
Kelly Services, Inc.

LINKING EDUCATION WITH EXPERIENCE: INTERNSHIPS IN HR

Most entry-level positions in human resources require a minimum of one year of experience, and many require two to three years of experience. A 2007 SHRM survey focusing on HR internships showed that 96 percent of undergraduate HR students who secured employment in HR state that their HR internship was a critical component of being prepared to accept their first professional HR position. While SHRM does not offer formal placement assistance, it does offer the opportunity to meet and build relationships with HR professionals who represent potential employers. Many SHRM chapters have career services, such as placement services or newsletters that advertise open positions. Many student members have obtained internships and entry-level jobs, never advertised to the public, through the connections they made as active members of SHRM.

Internships are an important part of your career development. For more information and a listing of available HR internships, visit www.shrm.org/students/intern_published/.



Finding Your First HR Position Requires Skill and Knowledge

Books on job hunting and placement studies agree that between 60 percent and 70 percent of all jobs are found through personal contacts or networking. Because human resources can be a tough field to enter, developing a network of HR contacts can be critical to locating your first position. The Internet offers many forms of assistance for the job seeker; there are sites that advertise openings, as well as sites that post résumés. Current HR job listings on the SHRM web site are located at www.shrm.org/jobs.

Some large companies such as IBM Corporation and Accenture recruit recent graduates for their training programs; many others also have HR leadership development programs. While some schools with dedicated HR programs have recruiters come to campus, many organizations use other recruitment methods to find and attract college graduates for HR openings. Your university's career center will be able to guide you in your job search.

As noted earlier, many entry-level HR positions advertised in the paper or online require one or more years' experience, and it is for this reason that SHRM emphasizes the importance of taking advantage of HR internships while still in school—or immediately after graduating. Internships, part-time jobs or temporary positions in HR can get you the needed experience, acquaint you with the field and provide a realistic job preview of a company you like. These work arrangements sometimes lead to full-time positions, and definitely help you gain the experience necessary to be a successful HR professional.

Creativity and persistence can help you break into the HR field. Some start out in different positions, such as an HR assistant or a line manager role; they gain experience in the company and later move into a professional-level HR role. Others start out at small organizations without an HR department. As the organization grows, the company will eventually need to establish an HR department and an opportunity may arise. To learn more about the job market in your community, talk with local HR professionals and ask them for their advice on the best ways to get started in an HR career.



Internships

Transitioning to a Career In Human Resources from Another Field Requires the Right Kind of Preparation.

If you have a different academic background from that described, or you have been employed in another profession, a readily transferable, related academic background and related professional experience will help.

Experience in general management and an understanding of business processes are vitally important. You may, therefore, wish to consider pursuing either an MBA or an MS graduate degree with a concentration in human resources in order to break into the field of HR.

When there are not sufficient numbers of qualified HR professionals with the preferred experience, employers occasionally hire other professionals who have related experience and who are willing to undertake additional education or training.

Those interested in HR as a profession can take college courses, attend seminars or take self-study courses as a beginning. In such circumstances, professional counselors might find opportunities in employer-sponsored employee assistance programs; teachers may be hired by training departments; or accounting, math and statistics majors could find employment in compensation and employee benefits. Law school graduates or attorneys may be hired to handle legal compliance or employee relations activities. Above-average communications skills are always essential for HR professionals. Since HR professionals handle confidential information, and must be comfortable interacting with employees at all levels, companies often seek people who are mature and experienced professionals—especially for higher-level positions in HR.

EARNING PROFESSIONAL CREDENTIALS: AN OVERVIEW OF THE HUMAN RESOURCE CERTIFICATION INSTITUTE (HRCI)

Certification demonstrates competence and commitment to the field of human resources. The Human Resource Certification Institute (HRCI) is the human resource profession's credentialing body and is an affiliate of SHRM. HRCI exists to promote the establishment of standards for the profession and to recognize HR professionals who have met, through demonstrated professional experience and the passing of a comprehensive written examination, the Institute's requirements for mastering the codified HR body of knowledge. Certification not only provides national recognition of one's accomplishments in the field of human resources, but it also exhibits their initiative to potential employers.



"As president of the student chapter at the University of New Orleans, I quickly developed a passion for HR—and landed my first HR job by going to a local professional chapter lunch and putting résumés on the tables. I followed an employee benefits career path—first as an analyst, then as a specialist and now a benefits consultant. I earned the PHR certification when I completed my degree—and subsequently earned both my SPHR and CEBS professional certifications."

Shannon Bearden, SPHR
Consultant, Mercer

For students or recent graduates, passing the exam is the first step toward becoming fully certified. Within five years of graduation, students must acquire two years of exempt-level HR experience to start using the credential. Individuals will then be designated a certified Professional in Human Resources, or PHR. Once an individual has obtained the necessary requirements, the designation of PHR is awarded by HRCI. Additionally, individuals may become certified as SPHR (Senior Professional in Human Resources) and GPHR (Global Professional in Human Resources). To learn more about the various types of HR certifications, visit www.hrci.org.

Continuing Education

Staying current in one's profession is essential to all industries, and human resource management is no exception. To meet the ongoing educational needs of human resource professionals, seminars and certification programs provide many worthwhile opportunities to enhance understanding of the latest developments in the field. Many organizations offer professional development programs specifically designed to help HR professionals stay current in HR competencies. For certified HR professionals, HRCI often pre-approves professional development providers so certified professionals will be able to use hours earned in seminars and workshops toward recertification hours requirements. For more information on SHRM's professional development programs, visit www.shrm.org; and, if you are a certified HR professional, for more information on HRCI's pre-approved provider organizations, visit www.hrci.org.



Career Paths in HR

CAREER PATHS IN HR: GENERALIST VERSUS SPECIALIST. WHAT'S RIGHT FOR YOU?

Armed with all the information contained in this booklet, deciding how to choose between an HR generalist and HR specialist career often depends not only on your personal preferences, but also upon the nature and size of the organization. This section describes the generalist and specialist roles to help you decide which path to follow. Information on where to find salary data is included at the end of this section.

The Generalist

HR generalists have a broad spectrum of responsibilities: staffing the organization, training and developing employees at all levels, managing a diverse workforce, maintaining a fair and equitable compensation program, developing personnel policies and procedures, planning ways to meet the human resource needs of the future, and ensuring that internal policies and programs conform to all laws that affect the workplace. Entry-level generalist positions are often titled human resource/personnel assistant and support the work of the whole department. Examples of generalist job titles include HR business partner; HR generalist; HR department or branch manager; chief HR officer; people services specialist or manager.

The Specialist

Larger organizations require specialists with technical knowledge and skills in specific areas of human resource management.

The five most common areas of specialization are described here. Entry-level positions often fall within these specialties. Opportunities in these areas are more likely to be found in larger organizations.

"Early in my career while working as an intern, I realized the potential and the influence I could have as an HR professional. I was captivated! Using SHRM as my career development guide and resource, I advanced from an Employee Relations Specialist to Manager of Human Resources before accepting the position I have held for the last 15 years as HR Director. I feel blessed to have followed such a wonderful career path."

Margaret Evans, Ph.D., SPHR
Director, Human Resources
Government Employees
Health Association

SPECIALIST ROLES

1. Workforce Planning and Employment

The typical entry-level positions are often called interviewer or recruiter. The work includes implementing the organization's recruiting strategy, interviewing applicants, administering pre-employment tests, assisting with conducting background investigations, and processing transfers, promotions and terminations. Examples of job titles in this specialty area are chief talent manager or officer; recruiter; recruitment and retention specialist or manager; staffing specialist or manager.

2. HR Development

The typical entry-level position may be a training or orientation/on-boarding specialist. The work consists of conducting training sessions, administering on-the-job training programs, evaluating training programs and maintaining necessary records of employee participation in all training and development programs. Such training

responsibilities may involve specific fields such as sales techniques or safety programs. Career planning and counseling are becoming increasingly important activities in this field, as are responsibilities for human resource planning and organizational development. Examples of job titles in this specialty area are trainer; employee development specialist or manager; leadership development specialist or manager; organizational development (OD) specialist or manager.

3. Total Rewards

Entry-level positions are typically salary administrators, compensation analysts and benefits administrators. Responsibilities in compensation include analyzing job duties, writing job descriptions, performing job evaluations and job analysis, and conducting and analyzing compensation surveys. Benefits professionals may develop detailed data analysis of benefits programs, administer benefits plans and monitor benefits costs. They may be responsible for oversight of vendors or partners to whom these functions have been outsourced. Example job titles in this specialty area are compensation and administrative services specialist; benefits analyst; compensation specialist or manager.

4. Employee and Labor Relations

Entry-level positions include labor relations specialist, plan personnel assistant or employee relations specialist. In union environments, these positions involve interpreting union contracts, helping to negotiate collective bargaining agreements, resolving grievances and advising supervisors on union contract interpretation. In non-union environments, employee relations



Career paths

specialists perform a variety of generalist duties and may also deal with employee grievances, employee involvement or engagement programs and other employee relations work. Examples of titles in this specialty area are performance management specialist, manager or director; employee advocate; and manager of labor relations.

5. Risk Management

Safety specialists' responsibilities include developing and administering health and safety programs, conducting safety inspections, maintaining accident records, and preparing government reports in order to maintain compliance obligations under the law. Security specialists are responsible for maintaining a secure work facility to protect the organization's confidential information and property, and the well-being of all employees. Employee assistance program counselors and medical program administrators also work within this function. Examples of titles in this specialty area are safety officer; risk management specialist or manager; and OSHA manager.

Other specialists' responsibilities don't fall neatly into one functional area. Human resource information systems (HRIS) specialists manage the computerized flow of information and reports about employees, their benefits and programs. Some specialists manage global HR—a growing specialty area—while others concentrate on organizational development and meeting the organization's needs for workers in the future. Still, others pursue HR consultancy or teaching HR in an academic setting. Many options are available, depending on the area of HR that interests you most.

Changing specialties within HR can also enhance career development possibilities; at some point in your HR career, you may wish to pursue another area of interest within the field. The SHRM HR Career Guide is an interactive mapping tool enabling SHRM HR professionals to plan their HR career. This free SHRM member benefit provides HR professionals with the ability to evaluate their current role, identifies possible career steps and offers resources to help reach their goals. The Guide will also help familiarize you with the education, skills and competencies necessary for various HR positions. It is available online at www.shrm.org/hrcareerguide.



"Don't overlook chances to volunteer; it often opens doors to professional opportunities not otherwise available to you. As an educator, I entered the world of HR by accepting volunteer roles at my local chapter. The connections I made allowed me to become the 'go to' person in our community for HR issues and serve in leadership roles at the state, regional and national levels."

Pat Beck, SPHR
Self-Employment Training
Coordinator/HR Focus
Great Plains
Technology Center

SALARIES FOR HR PROFESSIONALS

Salaries for HR professionals differ and are dependent upon many factors such as an organization's size, economic activity, geographic location and profitability.

SHRM's Compensation Data Center

The Society for Human Resource Management, in collaboration with Watson Wyatt Data Services, a recognized leader in global compensation surveys, brings you the SHRM HR Compensation Data Center. The Center features information on salaries and salary ranges, bonuses and other cash compensation, and total compensation for approximately 170 common (and not-so-common) HR positions. As part of your SHRM membership, you can access five popular positions for free—HR manager, HR generalist, compensation and benefits manager, employment/recruiting representative and employee benefits administrator.

Visit the Center online at www.shrm.org/compensationdata/ for information on accessing up-to-date HR salary information for all 170+ HR positions.



ABOUT SHRM

SHRM provides its members with education and information services, conferences and seminars, government and media representation, online services and publications that prepare HR professionals for their roles as leaders and decision makers within their organizations. The Society is a founding member of the North American Human Resource Management Association (NAHRMA) and a founding member and Secretariat of the World Federation of Personnel Management Associations (WFPMA), which links human resource associations around the globe.

SHRM publishes *HR Magazine*® each month, plus newsletters and other printed materials that serve the ongoing information needs of the profession. Through its Knowledge Center, SHRM supplements its publishing efforts with additional resources available to members.

SHRM offers two main membership categories. Professional membership is designed to meet the needs of people currently working in the HR field, while student membership is offered to individuals just exploring human resources and preparing to enter the profession. If you plan to use the membership to assist you in your work as an HR professional, we recommend that you join as a regular member to gain full access to all services and benefits.

Browse www.shrm.org/join for details on member benefits and joining as a professional member.

For more information on student membership, please visit www.shrm.org/students or e-mail SHRMStudent@shrm.org.

For more information on SHRM's academic initiatives, visit www.shrm.org/hrededucation or e-mail Nancy Woolever at nwoolever@shrm.org.

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www.shrm.org/students

SHRM Academic Initiatives

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www.shrm.org/hrededucation

"Whether undertaking educational or professional opportunities, always keep a sharp eye on what you're doing and how you're doing it. Think how assignments and activities can convert to skills that are transferable or applicable to a higher-level professional position. Volunteering—giving back to the profession—also serves as a good launch pad to other career opportunities."

Alice Dendinger, SPHR
HR Consultant Coach and
Mediator
Alice Dendinger
Alliance Group





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