

Give the CHRP some time

Should you get your Certified Human Resources Professional Designation (CHRP)? Is it something all new HR professionals need? Will it help senior professionals in their pursuit of a more strategic role? Does it stack up against designations in other professions?

Ask HR professionals these questions — as *Canadian HR Reporter* has in this issue — and you get a range of opinions. Some feel it helps with the job search but doesn't arm practitioners with any additional knowledge. Some feel it has little importance to senior HR execs, while others contend it will help HR gain recognition among senior management. There are complaints about what's being tested, or not tested, on exams. Some people don't even accept you can test for some of the soft skills HR deploys, so what's the point? Or that HR should forget about documenting its own standards and worry more about achieving business acumen.

The CHRP is often compared unfavourably to other professional designations, such as those for accountants. But accountants have quite a head start.

The Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants traces its beginning back to the creation of the Association of Accountants in Montreal in 1879. The HR Professionals Association of Ontario got going about 55 years later when the Personnel Association of Toronto formed in the mid-1930s — and HR didn't develop as a discipline beyond personnel adminis-



EDITOR'S NOTES

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tration until the 1970s.

By the late 1880s, the chartered accountants were granting the CA designation and by 1938 provincial chartered accountancy associations were meeting to draw up national exams. Compare that to the CHRP which got its legal standing when the Ontario legislature recognized it in 1990. (Quebec was a bit earlier with two designations — one in HR and the other in industrial relations.) In English Canada, provincial HR associations began working together to develop a transferable CHRP designation in the mid-1990s. The Canadian Council of HR Associations was formed at that time, and national exams and CHRP standards (Quebec included) were put in place in 2003. So it was more than 60 years after the chartered accountants organized their national designation that HR profession did the same.

And then there's the nature of the profession. Accountancy is black and white. If the numbers don't add up correctly the job hasn't been done correctly (unless you work at Enron). An

HR professional has to know a lot of hard facts around legal compliance, but human resources includes judgment calls based on experience. Because of this, critics question the CHRP's ability to verify that a professional has both hard and soft skills needed for the role. CAs don't have the same problem.

But comparing the CHRP to the CA and other established professional designations is unfair. It is only in the last few decades that HR has emerged as a higher-level discipline, and in that time Canada's HR associations have worked hard to develop standards. HR itself is practised in widely varying circumstances — from sophisticated departments that play a role in business strategy and organizational effectiveness to those that merely hand out cheques when they're not overseeing the photocopier. As HR morphs from transactional to strategic, its practitioners will gain recognition and awareness of the CHRP designation that denotes their professional standing will grow.

And it won't take 65 years to catch up to accountants. The CHRP has come a long way in a short time. Critics need to give it time to grow as the profession has.

While there is debate about the CHRP's value, professionals are indeed pursuing it. Seventy-four per cent of 864 HR professional responding to *Canadian HR Reporter's* poll (see page one) said they either have a CHRP or are working toward one. And that's a good thing.