

## HRD Comprehensive Exam List of Questions

1. As one of the top HR people at your organization, you are being asked to lead a Reduction In Force (RIF) project which will eliminate 25% of the workforce across multiple company US locations. Describe the steps and project plan in-depth including some of the project challenges and how you might overcome them.
2. You are negotiating an offer with a mid-career Systems Engineering candidate that your organization really wants, but your start up organization can't afford to pay what he/she is currently earning. The market salary for the role is typically between \$60 - \$80K and the candidate is currently working for a much larger organization at \$85K. The position has been open for over 3 months and the business manager has turned down candidate after candidate and only agrees to meet with candidates who are overqualified. Describe your strategy and preparation for the conversation with the candidate as well as the business manager. You had originally had some reservations about presenting this candidate and now the business line is counting on you to close the deal.
3. As you consider High Performance Work Systems (HPWS), how does aligning people, technology, and organizational design create optimal business results? Be specific in discussing expected outcomes and results when creating a High Performing Organization (HPO).
4. There is a need for businesses to transfer knowledge from the baby-boomers who are retiring over the next decade or so to the millennials, who bring different talents and expectations. Describe how an organization can build a collaborative, knowledge sharing environment that supports both groups of employees.
5. You are a senior director of HR who is directly in charge of issues related to diversity and inclusion within a medium-sized U.S.-based organization. It has come to your attention that there may be some problems surrounding diversity within one of the two major locations, its Philadelphia and Phoenix offices, that the organization operates from. Via an online survey distributed to employees working in both locations, the HR department has gathered ratings of employees' perceptions of each location's climate for diversity, defined as the extent to which an organization advocates fair human resource policies and socially integrates underrepresented employees. There are five questions that comprise the diversity climate measure, each of which was rated on a 1 to 7 scale. There were 75 employees who participated from the Philadelphia location and 72 from the Phoenix location.
  - a. How would you go about analyzing the data to determine whether one location or another seemed to have issues surrounding diversity that might require further investigation and possible intervention?
  - b. If there were three locations, how would this change your strategic approach to analyzing the data?
6. You have recently collected data for your company's annual employee engagement survey. There are several variables that you are interested in with respect to their relationships to employee engagement: perceived senior leadership effectiveness, satisfaction with recognition, satisfaction with the organization's mission, and perceived professional growth opportunities. These variables, along with the employee engagement questions, have been rated by a sample of employees from the organization on a 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 5 ("Strongly Agree") scale. How would you go about analyzing the data to determine the relative importance of each of the four variables in predicting employee engagement and why?

7. The Vice President for Human Resources has asked you to become the “fiduciary” for the organization’s pension plan. Outline what responsibilities arise with that role.
8. What competencies are important for success in HR management?
9. HR leaders should always adopt a strategic business focus. As a people-centered function, HR touches every part of the employee lifecycle. Please describe the steps that HR leaders can take to ensure that they are being strategic in recruitment, selection, and retention of employees. How would you know that you had been successful in each of these areas?
10. Identify three key differences between traditional workforce planning (succession planning) and strategic workforce planning (SWFP). Briefly discuss each.
11. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of flexible work schedules.
12. Year over, company XYZ is consistently filling the same position with external hires due to voluntary turnover. Though it is a critical sales role, a proper evaluation of underlying issues and a plan to address the attrition issue has not been established. What, specifically, can be done in this situation to identify factors leading to high turnover? What staffing strategies could be best suited to fit the above need? Chose one and explain how this could develop an improvement to the scenario.
13. Describe the recruiting policy of an international organization that uses an ethnocentric approach to hiring.
14. The major objectives of performing a Gap Analysis are to compare your projections of the existing workforce adjusted for attrition, with the number of staff required to perform the work functions. Outline a steps or general scenario to illustrate this equation.
15. Tommy is a cashier at Rick’s Sporting Goods, a huge athletic apparel and equipment store. He lost both of his legs while serving in the military. He is able to walk with prosthetics, but it is quite cumbersome. At work, Tommy is allowed to sit at a stool, and thus far he has been able to perform his cashier position successfully. Earlier this year, Rick’s Sporting Goods adopted a company wellness policy that states: “Studies show that people who get in 10,000 steps per day tend to be much healthier than those who barely walk at all! We are therefore discontinuing our practice of allowing employees to utilize Rick’s Sporting Goods golf carts to move around our megastores so that our employees can get their steps in!” Tommy says that without the use of a golf cart, it takes him more time and is far more difficult to arrive at his workstation. He asked that Rick’s allow him to keep using a golf cart, but the company denied his request and instead offered to let him use a wheelchair. Tommy does not want to use a wheelchair so as not to attract unwanted attention. Does he have a viable claim against his employer?
16. How would you make the case for HR as a strategic, as opposed to administrative, function of an organization? What evidence exists to support this claim from the HR and psychology research?
17. Throughout the many facets of HR functions (e.g., workforce planning, training, planning for organizational change, compensation, benefits, diversity and inclusion, selection, performance management, recruitment, etc.), tracking metrics is a key to success. Select two core areas of HR functions and propose a "best practice" initiative that a company could implement that is relevant

to that function. Then, discuss how you would use metrics to determine where the organization currently stands and how the organization might evaluate the outcome of your proposed initiative over time.

18. You wish to provide your line management with information about employer actions and liabilities under the law. Explain the concept of employment at will. Be sure to provide a definition as well as examples of any exceptions.
19. You work for a global professional services firm, which has been seen for decades as an employer of choice. Last month, you were promoted to the position of Vice President, Human Resources. The promotion comes at a time the organization is experiencing a decline in revenues, an increase in competition, high voluntary turnover in the US and abroad, and declining market share. Anecdotal information suggests that the cause of voluntary turnover is due to a poor employee benefits/total rewards strategy, employee engagement and organizational culture. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) has requested your analysis and recommendations on improving the total rewards strategy in an effort to improve employee engagement; reduce voluntary turnover and enhancing the employer's brand.
  - a. What are specific actions you can initially take to identify and validate how total rewards are having an impact on the organization? Explain your rationale.
  - b. Identify and describe the challenges the organization faces in managing the design, delivery and financing of a total rewards program on a local and global perspective.
  - c. What recommendations would you submit to the CEO concerning total rewards strategy? Your recommendations must be explained with sufficient depth to make an effective business case for funding. Key performance indicators must be included in your recommendations.
20. Talent management strategy requires a strong investment in total rewards. Explain the elements of a total rewards program as part of a talent management strategy. Describe specific elements of a total rewards program and how each element serves HR and business strategy.
21. The regulatory environment along with a hyper-competitive business climate generates considerable pressure on organizations to balance benefit plan management and administrative burdens, regulatory compliance and benefits strategy. Identify at least two significant employee benefit regulatory requirements an organization must address. Briefly explain the essential elements of each and describe how you would effectively balance the investment of resources to ensure the organization meets its regulatory compliance and benefits program strategy.
22. How can organizations motivate employees to promote safety and health in the workplace?
23. Considering the job of a customer service representative who performs work over the telephone. What measures might an employer take to design this job to make it efficient? What drawbacks or challenges might result from designing the job for efficiency?
24. Demographic and cultural changes impact Human Resources Management. Identify one demographic, one employee rights, and one work/life balance issue that has impacted HR. Briefly describe each and explain how it is affecting Human Resources Management.

25. Explain the difference between a low-cost versus a differentiation strategy. How does each affect the human resources strategy employed by the organization?
26. Bob, a customer service manager at a call center, prides himself on being able to “read” people. He says he can tell whether someone will make a good employee as soon as he meets them and “sizes” them up. In fact, he uses his personal judgment to decide to hire or reject job applicants for the center he oversees. Provide a review of Bob’s hiring system with regards to EEO. Is Bob’s system legal? Why or why not? What defense options exist for Bob’s company in the event that his system of selection is challenged for being discriminatory?
27. What are the products of an effectively performed job analysis? How does a job analysis support the various Human Resources Management functions (Recruitment and Selection, Training and Development, Performance Appraisal, Compensation Management, and Legal Compliance)?
28. Many organizations rely on employee referral programs to identify prospective employees. What are the advantages and disadvantages of such an approach?
29. Describe the two possible selection errors (False Positive and False Negative) that can result from selection. Which error is more severe, and why?
30. Describe the two broad purposes performance appraisals serve for organizations and then provide two specific examples under each purpose.
31. Outline the tenets of equity theory and explain how it relates and can be applied to systems of compensation.
32. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of a compensation system based on straight salary versus straight commission for a sales position. Provide perspective from both the employers and employees.
33. With respect to retirement plans, what are some important distinctions between a defined benefit plan and a defined contribution plan?
34. Describe the conditions under which job stress and burnout are likely.
35. You are brought in as the new Director of HR for a company in the distribution industry which is the merger between Company A and Company B. Company A began as a family business which acquired a number of small companies over time. As a result of all of these acquisitions, the company was less standardized and more decentralized internally and was somewhat of a combination of cultures to begin with. The culture of Company A is quite varied. Some areas of the company are focused on metrics and quality, others are focused on job satisfaction and employee attitudes, and still others are not focused on either. Generally, the company strives to produce a range of high quality products and services, but the way that this occurs is unstructured throughout the company. Company B was a large company which was standardized internally with a strong culture surrounding processes and procedures. Company B has a centralized structure with clear employee policies. Company B is focused on quality control. They stress standardized processes and procedures across all business units. They have a clear mission and goal that emphasizes one thing: productivity. Company B has been successful with strategy monetarily, but its employees are often overworked and overwhelmed. Both companies have fears regarding losing desirable aspects of their current culture. What strategy would you use to

resolve the culture differences between these two organizations to create a new organization with a cohesive culture?

36. The newly constituted HR Department has applied interventions designed to smoothly merge two companies and create one unified organizational culture. The HR Department of the new company now wants to answer several research questions related to the merger's success. A representative sample of employees, including individuals formerly from each company will be used to make inferences about the larger company-wide population. The HR Department want to know whether the new company has been successful in creating a unified organizational culture and whether there any differences in employees' perceptions of the organization's culture depending on whether individuals were formerly associated with one company versus the other. Finally, there is interest in determining whether employee engagement and performance changed pre-merger to post-merger. Describe what data you would collect and analyses you would run in order to answer each question and why.
37. The CEO just took a three-week executive management seminar at a local university. Upon returning to work, she went straight to your office as VP of Human Resources. She wants you to examine the organization's culture. She now knows that a core requirement to being an effective HR professional is to understand the business in the broadest, most comprehensive sense, and be able to identify potential opportunities or threats to its growth and sustainability. This means understanding strategic issues such as vision, mission, and strategy (including products, target customers, infrastructure mechanisms). It also means understanding how work is performed, the technology tools used, the labor force dynamics, and the communication mechanisms. Taken together, the array of these organizational "levers" either support or detract from the espoused culture. She wants to know how you would investigate the culture of your company. Specifically, she wants to know:
  - a. How would you go about learning and assessing your company?
  - b. What organizational model or models would you use as your interpretive framework for understanding how the different parts of the company are operating?
  - c. What steps would you take to identify potential opportunities and threats/constraints to the company? (Note: think both external and internal)
38. Company A does not have a central Training & Development function. Each manager sends their employees to external training and development opportunities. There is no link back to performance management or development planning process. Many employees view training as a vacation day and are not held accountable for any follow-up on the job. Company B has a training department that uses a Corporate University model where a standard leadership development curriculum is offered. The department employs performance consultants assigned to business units. They are considered a center of excellence and track the utilization of classroom and web-based training using a learning management system. How would you approach the establishment of a Training & Development function that meets the needs of a merged organization and is seen as aligned with business strategy?
39. You are working for a company that is highly profitable. However, there is a concern that employee engagement is low.
  - a. How would you assess whether employee engagement is low?
  - b. What key indicators might you capture to measure the impact of employee engagement?

- c. Provide three examples of possible interventions that might help improve engagement within organizations in general.
  - d. Using your specific interventions and associated metrics as a basis, how would you measure whether each had worked?
40. You have served as HR Director for over a decade for Equis Pharmaceuticals, a domestic producer of antibiotics. Equis has recently acquired R&D and manufacturing operations in Austria, France, Tel Aviv, and Tokyo. You are leading a team charged with developing a strategy for expanding global operations. Considering the conceptual contributions of Tichy, Trompenaars, and Ulrich, outline your strategy in the following areas:
- a. Improving staffing for these global operations in a way that maximizes agility and cultural common ground.
  - b. Developing talent within the organization in a way that sustains traditional strengths while enhancing readiness for change/improvement.
  - c. Managing risk derived from changing technology, culture, and political forces.
41. Every year, one of the key decisions in each company is to select the capital projects which they are going to implement and which ones they are going to reject. Discuss this decision making process and be sure to include the cost of capital, time value of money, net present value, and the internal rate of return in your discussion.
42. Imagine that you are the Director of HR for a company in the technology industry. The industry is rapidly changing and very fast-paced. Unfortunately, your company has not been performing well compared to competitors. The DuPont model of calculating the Return on Assets and the Return on Equity is a powerful tool for analysis. Use the data from the table below:

Year	NPM	TAT	FLM	ROA	ROE
2010	.074	1.8	1.75	13.32%	23.31%
2011	.071	1.93	1.9	13.70%	26.04%
2012	.055	2.03	2.04	11.17%	22.78%

NPM = Net Profit Margin  
TAT = Total Asset Turnover  
FLM = Financial Leverage Multiplier  
ROA = Return on Total Assets  
ROE = Return on Equity

- a. Determine the potential areas of financial strength and weakness.
  - b. After you determine these financial strengths and weaknesses, what strategies should the company implement to improve the situation?
  - c. How can HR contribute to this effort or be actively involved in the process?
43. Explain the difference between disparate impact and disparate treatment and provide an example of each.
44. How did the Americans with Disabilities Act “ADA” Amendments Act alter the threshold for what constitutes a disability, and as a result, what did Congress intend for employers to emphasize when confronted with an ADA claim?

45. As outlined by Kaplan and Norton, the “Balanced Scorecard” relies on 1) Translating the vision; 2) Communicating and linking; 3) Business planning; and 4) Feedback and learning, in addition to traditional financial measures to help a company achieve its long-term strategic objectives. Briefly describe how achieving long-term strategic objectives is achieved through each of the four processes.
46. What are some advantages of increased workplace diversity in the workplace? What support conditions must be present in order to achieve these advantages?
47. What is corporate social responsibility and what additional considerations exist for organizations that broadly set corporate social responsibility and sustainability goals from organizations that exclusively serve financial stakeholders?
48. Identify and describe four principles of learning that underlie effective training programs. For example, when someone is learning a new skill (such as a new interpersonal technique), what are some of the things (i.e., learning principles) that can be done to facilitate the fastest acquisition of this new skill.
49. You are going to meet with top management to discuss how employee engagement and organization commitment impact important organizational outcomes. What would you emphasize in making your business case as to why the company should care about its level of employee engagement and commitment?
50. Name several goals associated with team building.
51. You are told by a colleague that she just ran a t-test to see whether a new training program was effective. She tells you that the difference between the group that received the training and the control group were “non-significant at the  $p < .05$  level.” What are the possible explanations for this outcome?
52. St. Joseph's Day School is a private Catholic elementary school. It employs 43 people. Paula is a fourth grade teacher at the school. She is unmarried. When she announces to her supervisor that she is pregnant, she is fired the next day. Paula files a claim of sex and pregnancy discrimination with the EEOC. What is the likely result and why?
53. Butch is the owner of Tools R' Us, a local hardware store. Butch previously ran the store by himself, but with the holidays coming he decided he was going to hire 2 employees. Butch hired Cam and Sam. Butch was impressed with both men's home improvement skills and knowledge of his product offerings. After hiring Cam, Butch learned that Cam has a boyfriend. Upon learning this, Butch began micro managing Cam and treating him differently than Sam, who is heterosexual. Cam is getting fed up with Butch's insults about his masculinity. Discuss whether Cam has a discrimination claim and provide the basis for your position?
54. Frank, aged 60, was an executive chef at a Zagat-rated Philadelphia restaurant for 8 years. He often received many compliments from his customers and the restaurant's business was booming. In January of 2014, the owner appointed 37-year-old Alice as Frank's supervisor. In March of 2014, Alice told Frank that the restaurant was moving in a different direction in the future. In April of 2014, Frank was replaced by a 45-year-old executive chef from New York. The restaurant contends that Frank does not have a prima facie case because his replacement is in the

protected class – is this a sufficient defense and explain why or why not with supporting information?

55. John believes in the Jediism which holds Star Wars characters as religious idols. The religion holds religious beliefs as to what is right (a/k/a “the force”) and in evil (a/k/a “the dark side”). John works at ABC company which focuses on technology. ABC is pretty liberal in allowing employees to bring movie paraphernalia to work and John, as a result, has many Star Wars posters and figures at his desk. One of his coworkers, David, brought a Darth Vader mask and hung it outside his cubical and across from John’s cubical. John complains about the Darth Vader mask and claims that it is interfering with his religion. ABC says that this is silly and it is consistent with their policies and refuses to remove the Vader mask. What claims does John have, if any? How would you handle this issue as HR Manager?
56. HR professionals were once viewed only as operational executors, focused on administrative tasks. However, effective HR professionals now must hold a diverse set of roles within organizations. The responsibility to demonstrate these various facets of HR lies with the HR professional themselves, however. Please choose three of the following HR skillsets and describe how you would demonstrate these capabilities as an HR professional: 1) Credible activist, 2) Business ally, 3) Talent Manager/OD Specialist, 4) Strategic Architect, or 5) Cultural and Change Steward.
57. High Performing Work Systems (HPWS) link people, processes, and technology. It is the integration of these three workplace constructs that help to create a systems-thinking organization. Describe two employee involvement (i.e., employee ownership) activities that help to support HR functions, and describe how the team/group might focus on aligning the three constructs to support optimal outcomes. Begin your answer by providing your own definition of employee involvement strategies.
58. Trends in the external environment (technology, global, immediate response, demographics, etc.) are changing how we hire, who we hire, and where we hire. Define (and be specific) on three trends impacting business and discuss their impact on employees and business leaders. What can HR do to respond proactively to the changes within an organization to be ready to address these external trends.
59. List and describe four major forces influencing the workplace and learning.
60. What are four intangible assets that can be most directly influenced by training and development?
61. Describe three reasons for increased use of new technologies for training delivery.
62. Delivery of training in the future must be done faster and more efficiently. How can this be done? What are some techniques to accomplish this goal?
63. Discuss the relative merits of internal versus external recruitment.
64. How can organizations help improve the quality of their interviewing so that interviews provide valid information for hiring purposes?

65. Explain the difference between compensatory and multiple hurdles models of employee selection.
66. How is a coach different from a mentor?
67. How can technology improve the quality of HR decisions?
68. Describe why information security and privacy are important considerations in the design, development, and maintenance of an HRIS.
69. What factors have led to the increased organizational interest in HR metrics and workforce analytics?
70. If the parties negotiating a labor contract are unable to reach an agreement, what actions can resolve the situation?