

# HITTING THE MARK

An architect of HR certification in Australia talks about how the program adapts to an ever-changing business landscape.

BY GIRARD DORNEY

**Y**ou don't need a study – though there are plenty of them – to know that the pace of technological and market change is faster than it has ever been, and it's getting faster. This is a key challenge for companies, but more so for education. How do you design a course so that it reflects the business environment, gives practical skills and is still appropriately accredited?

Dr Kim Schofield FCPHR, general manager for HR standards and practice at the Australian HR institute and one of the architects of its approach to certification, believes this has been done with the AHRI Practising Certification Program (APC).

“We listened to the marketplace and saw there was a lot of buzz around HR tech,” says Schofield, offering an example of how the program adapts. “So, we consulted the AHRI HR technology advisory panel, saying, ‘Look we need to build something in the APC program that deals with these issues.’”

That panel includes industry luminaries such as Rob Scott, global lead of strategy and innovation, Presence of IT, and Vice president of HCM Strategy at SuccessFactors Marc Havercroft. From the consultation came a whole new topic in the program that looks at how technology is revolutionising HR management and the workforce. It was slotted into Unit 1 of the course and specifically looks at how HR management can thrive in a volatile environment.

A similar process took place in reaction to the #metoo movement. Case studies were designed to reflect a world

that was focussed on sexual harassment. It followed a principle that you ground people in theory then get them to practise skills.

“We build it up. We give them content around ethics, dilemmas, and HR's role. Then we give short vignettes of workplace scenarios and get them to think about how they would manage them. This leads to the end of the session where we go through two meaty case studies, where the scenarios have no right answer. We get people to think through the options and try to get across that ethical dilemmas can be very context-specific. Maybe there's no right decision, but what is the role of HR?”

The APC program has three trimesters a year, and each is an opportunity for the course to be updated. “When we say it's topical – it's very topical. As we hear of issues from our HR community, we look at the content and say, ‘Do we need to strengthen it?’”

We were talking in May. Schofield says that by the the September stream the course could be updated – it can happen that fast.

But don't get the wrong impression, the APC program isn't a slave to trends.

“You're going to get content that's relevant to current issues, but it's not all changing all of the time. We build core competencies that are based on AHRI's model of excellence, which is a globally benchmarked competency framework.”

## Building capability

If you take the APC face-to-face, and not remotely, each unit consists of four

one-day workshops, which are spread three weeks apart over a twelve-week trimester. The fourth and final unit is a bit different. It still has the workshops, but they're spread over 30 weeks. And it's all practise. "In that unit they're covering off internal consulting and influencing skills, project management, change management and problem solving."

In this way the fourth unit ensures certification is adapted, not only to the modern world, but to the situation of each HR practitioner and their business context.

"They're coming and telling us what the business problem is they've identified, what's the proposed HR solution, and also how they're going to measure the impact through good HR metrics. We brainstorm it and pull that apart. It's supported by a sponsor in the workplace, who's got to sign off on it."

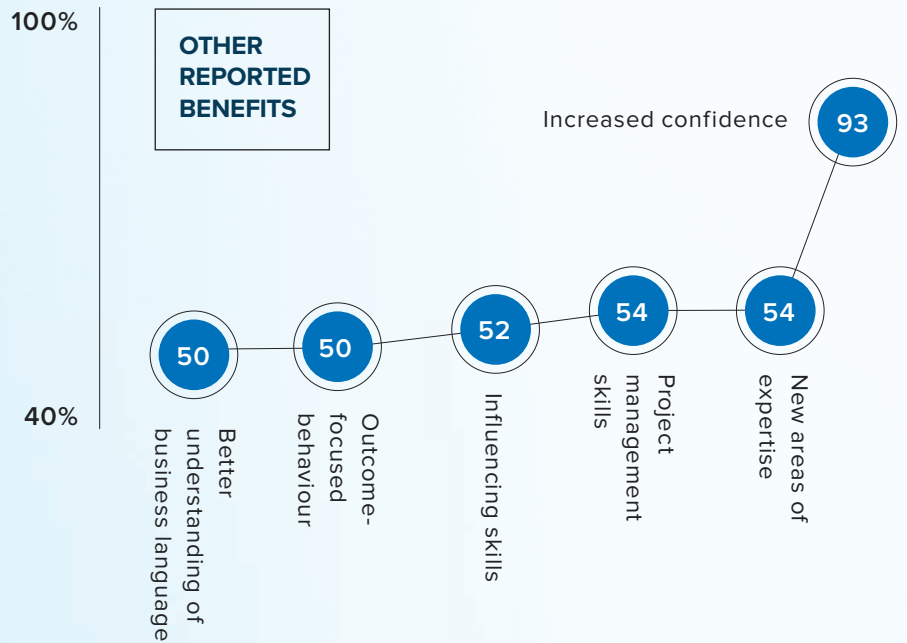
If you think about it, that's remarkable adaptation. Macro-trends don't effect everyone everywhere simultaneously; automation isn't relevant this moment to every business place. So by capping certification with a real-world test, the program ensures its evolution, continual relevancy and business impact. ●●●

**APC GRADUATES WERE ASKED WHAT CHANGED FOR THEM ONCE THEY ACHIEVED CERTIFICATION.**

**53%**  were provided with career opportunities that weren't previously available to them.

**91%**  feel more equipped to think strategically and measure the impact of HR intervention.

**81%**  feel they were perceived as a more trusted advisor in comparison to their colleagues.



**TIME FOR CHANGE?**

If you want to make a strategic impact in your workplace, talk to us about becoming a Certified HR Practitioner.

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