25 Free SHRM-CP® Practice Questions

Exam-style questions that mirror how certification exams actually test you

✓ Created by an SPHR-certified professional with 10+ years of HR experience

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Before You Begin

These 25 questions reflect the style and difficulty of the SHRM-CP® certification exam. They emphasize practical application: given a workplace scenario, what should HR do? This is how the real exam tests you, and it is why memorizing definitions is not enough.

All questions are written by an SPHR-certified HR professional with over a decade of hands-on experience. This is not generic content from a test prep factory. It is material designed by someone who has passed these exams and works in the field.

How to Use This PDF

1. Answer each question before checking the answer key.

2. Read the explanations carefully, even for questions you answered correctly.

3. Note which topics give you trouble. Those are your priority study areas.

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Practice Questions

Answer all questions before checking the answer key on the following pages.

Question 1

What is the PRIMARY reason HR professionals need to understand business operations and strategy?

    A) To ensure compliance with employment regulations

    B) To minimize workforce-related expenses

    C) To connect people initiatives with organizational objectives

    D) To manage employee relations more effectively

Question 2

You manage HR for a 100-person company. Production line attendance issues are increasing, but the department manager refuses to enforce discipline because qualified replacements are difficult to find. What is the BEST course of action?

    A) Enforce attendance policies consistently regardless of the manager's concerns

    B) Defer to the manager's judgment since the department is their responsibility

    C) Require the manager to complete policy compliance training

    D) Partner with the manager to develop a staffing contingency plan while addressing attendance

Question 3

During a performance review meeting, an employee becomes visibly upset and begins to cry. What should the HR professional do FIRST?

    A) Pause silently and allow the employee time to regain composure

    B) Demonstrate empathy and offer emotional support

    C) Continue with the review to avoid prolonging discomfort

    D) Reschedule the meeting to give the employee time to prepare

Question 4

Two department heads are engaged in a power struggle that is affecting cross-departmental collaboration and decision-making. As the HR business partner, what approach should you take?

    A) Avoid involvement to maintain neutrality between executives

    B) Support whichever department head has the stronger business case

    C) Facilitate communication and help both parties find common ground

    D) Recommend replacing one or both leaders to resolve the conflict

Question 5

In negotiation and conflict resolution contexts, what does BATNA represent?

    A) A method for analyzing market trends

    B) A framework for financial performance assessment

    C) A tool for evaluating project risks

    D) The best alternative course of action if negotiations are unsuccessful

Question 6

Mary, an HR professional, discovers that a colleague has been engaged in fraudulent activities within the organization. What should Mary do in this situation?

    A) Confront her colleague directly

    B) Report the misconduct to higher management or ethics hotline

    C) Ignore the misconduct to avoid confrontation

    D) Cover up her colleague's actions to protect the team's reputation

Question 7

Carlos often evaluates employees' performance based on their punctuality and attendance rather than their actual job performance. He frequently overlooks other aspects of their work. What type of bias is Carlos displaying?

A) Availability bias

B) Confirmation bias

C) Performance bias

D) Horn bias

Question 8

Mark, an IT supervisor, is asked by his manager to delete incriminating emails related to a regulatory violation. What ethical risk does Mark face in this situation?

A) Insider trading

B) Data breach

C) Falsifying records

D) Cybersecurity violations

Question 9

What is considered best practice for assessing leader performance?

A) Relying on self-assessments provided by leaders

B) Conducting 360-degree feedback assessments

C) Evaluating leaders based on employee reviews

D) Evaluating leaders based on their tenure

Question 10

You lead a diverse team with varying experience levels. Some are new, others have been with the company for years. Which technique is most appropriate?

A) Delegating

B) Mentoring

C) Directing

D) Coaching

Question 11

What is the key distinction between diversity and equity in workplace contexts?

A) Diversity recognizes advantages and barriers while equity encompasses human differences

B) Diversity involves valuing differences while equity addresses inequalities

C) Diversity means including individuals in groups while equity creates inclusive environments

D) Diversity values human differences while equity adjusts treatment based on individual circumstances for equal outcomes

Question 12

A company notices underrepresentation among employees with disabilities, particularly in leadership roles. What initiative should HR recommend?

A) Forming voluntary employee resource groups

B) Conducting employee focus groups

C) Establishing whistleblower hotlines

D) Creating policies with leadership training

Question 13

Employees discover significant pay differences among those in similar positions and bring concerns to HR. What should be HR's initial response?

A) Disciplining employees for sharing pay information against company policy

B) Conducting a pay audit to identify potential discriminatory patterns

C) Explaining that salaries reflect factors beyond job descriptions

D) Consulting legal counsel before taking action

Question 14

After DEI assessments, HR confirms disparities exist across programs. What should HR prioritize next?

A) Auditing the workplace to further evaluate initiative effectiveness

B) Holding focus groups for additional feedback

C) Investing in equity-focused hiring practices

D) Training managers on unconscious bias

Question 15

What step could organizations take to promote equity for a multigenerational workforce?

A) Implementing age-based promotions

B) Offering flexible work hours and remote options

C) Conducting cultural sensitivity training

D) Providing gender-specific benefits

Question 16

Which factor is NOT typically considered a significant influence on global mobility?

A) Economic opportunities

B) Cultural diversity

C) Political stability

D) Language homogeneity

Question 17

A large international corporation in China has employees enjoying above-market-range compensation. How can HR help motivate these workers beyond financial rewards?

A) Implement a more competitive compensation structure

B) Offer flexible work arrangements and work-life balance initiatives

C) Upgrade titles to signify seniority

D) Publicly praise the high-performing workers

Question 18

Which of the following is NOT a characteristic of cross-cultural competency?

A) Effective cross-cultural communication skills

B) Ability to enforce a standardized approach across all cultural contexts

C) Cultural sensitivity and empathy toward individuals from diverse backgrounds

D) Understanding of cultural norms and practices in different regions

Question 19

During major restructuring, what should HR prioritize to navigate effectively?

A) Maintaining strictly neutral stance

B) Implementing restructuring without considering concerns

C) Building relationships with key stakeholders

D) Eliminating political discussions

Question 20

A tech firm wants to improve innovation and creativity. What approach is most suitable?

A) Top-down leadership structure

B) Regular performance appraisals

C) Innovation lab for employee collaboration

D) Reducing benefits to fund innovation

Question 21

During job redesign, employees resist feeling anxious about changes. Which scenario best exemplifies HR conflict management?

A) HR listens attentively to concerns and collaboratively works toward solutions

B) HR conducts observations and makes recommendations to leaders

C) HR advocates for leadership development training

D) HR imposes changes then holds focus groups to explain benefits

Question 22

Which factor is a KEY contributor to employee engagement in the workplace?

A) The number of vacation days provided

B) The frequency of performance appraisals

C) The alignment of employee values with the organization's mission and values

D) The availability of workplace perks like free snacks

Question 23

How do realistic job previews (RJPs) influence employee engagement?

A) They provide employees with clear understanding of job expectations

B) They help employees predict success in their new role

C) They reveal challenges so employees can avoid them

D) They primarily affect turnover rather than engagement

Question 24

When is peer-to-peer recognition in the workplace MOST effective?

A) During annual performance reviews

B) In highly competitive work environments

C) When used as the sole form of recognition

D) As a regular and ongoing practice

Question 25

Which aspect of HR strategy specifically addresses ensuring the organization has qualified people available for critical roles when needed?

A) Employee retention initiatives

B) Workforce planning and talent acquisition

C) Employee engagement programs

D) Workplace diversity efforts

Answer Key

Question 1: C

HR professionals with strong business acumen can ensure that HR programs and initiatives support what the organization is trying to achieve. This strategic alignment creates value beyond transactional HR activities. While compliance, cost management, and employee relations are important HR functions, they do not capture the core purpose of business acumen: linking HR work to business outcomes.

Question 2: D

This approach addresses both the manager's legitimate concern (staffing challenges) and the need for policy compliance. Collaborating on a replacement plan makes enforcement more feasible. Strict enforcement without addressing staffing may worsen operations. Deferring completely abdicates HR's advisory role.

Question 3: B

Showing empathy and offering support acknowledges the employee's emotional state and creates a safe environment. This approach validates their feelings and helps them feel heard. While pausing gives space, it lacks the proactive support that demonstrates genuine care. Continuing dismisses the employee's emotional needs.

Question 4: C

HR should serve as a neutral facilitator to help leaders communicate, understand each other's perspectives, and identify solutions that serve the organization. Avoiding involvement allows the conflict to escalate. Taking sides damages credibility. Recommending termination is extreme and does not address the underlying dynamics.

Question 5: D

BATNA stands for Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement. It represents the most favorable option available if the current negotiation fails to produce an acceptable outcome. Understanding your BATNA strengthens negotiating position by clarifying the walk-away point.

Question 6: B

Mary should report the misconduct to higher management or an ethics hotline. Reporting unethical activities is essential to maintain integrity and ethical standards. Confrontation could escalate the situation. Ignoring misconduct enables further harm. Covering up actions makes Mary complicit.

Question 7: A

Carlos is displaying availability bias. He is overemphasizing the importance of punctuality and attendance because these aspects are readily available and easy to recall when evaluating employees. This causes him to overlook other important performance dimensions.

Question 8: C

Mark faces the ethical risk of falsifying records. Deleting incriminating emails related to a regulatory violation is a form of falsifying records as it involves altering or concealing information that may be required for legal or regulatory purposes.

Question 9: B

360-degree feedback involves gathering feedback from multiple sources including peers, subordinates, superiors, and self-assessments, providing comprehensive performance views. Self-assessments alone lack objectivity. Tenure does not measure performance.

Question 10: D

Coaching provides guidance, feedback, and support to help team members improve skills and achieve goals. It allows adapting approach to individual needs of each team member, which is essential when managing diverse experience levels.

Question 11: D

Diversity refers to valuing human differences across characteristics like race, gender, age, and background. Equity involves adjusting treatment based on individual circumstances to achieve fairness despite different starting points.

Question 12: A

Employee resource groups provide ongoing platforms for employees with shared characteristics to collaborate, share experiences, and advocate for change. Unlike one-time focus groups, ERGs create sustained community and organizational influence.

Question 13: B

A pay audit reviews compensation practices to identify discriminatory patterns. Under the NLRA, employees have legal rights to discuss pay, so discipline would be unlawful. Investigation should precede legal consultation as a proactive first step.

Question 14: D

With disparities confirmed, action is needed rather than more assessment. Manager training addresses unconscious biases affecting hiring, evaluations, promotions, and resource allocation decisions that perpetuate inequity.

Question 15: B

Flexible work hours and remote options accommodate different generational preferences and needs. Age-based promotions would be discriminatory, while cultural training and gender benefits do not specifically address generational diversity.

Question 16: D

Language homogeneity is not a significant influence on global mobility. Linguistic diversity or proficiency in multiple languages is often valued as it facilitates communication and collaboration across borders.

Question 17: B

Chinese employees value work-life balance and flexibility. Offering flexible work arrangements can significantly contribute to motivating employees beyond financial rewards. In cultures emphasizing collectivism and modesty, public praise may not be as effective.

Question 18: B

Cross-cultural competency does not involve enforcing a single standardized approach across all cultural contexts. It emphasizes adaptability and flexibility to accommodate and respect diverse cultural norms and practices.

Question 19: C

Building stakeholder relationships helps HR understand interests and concerns, fostering communication and collaboration during restructuring. Maintaining neutrality, ignoring concerns, or eliminating discussions all hinder effective change management.

Question 20: C

Innovation labs provide freedom for employees to collaborate and brainstorm, fostering a creativity culture. Top-down structures stifle innovation. Performance appraisals and benefit cuts do not directly address innovation needs.

Question 21: A

Constructive conflict management involves listening attentively, facilitating open dialogue, and collaboratively working toward solutions addressing employee needs. Imposing changes without dialogue creates resistance.

Question 22: C

Employee engagement is significantly influenced by alignment between an employee's personal values and the organization's mission and values. When employees find their work meaningful and aligned with their principles, they are more engaged.

Question 23: A

RJPs influence engagement by providing clear, honest expectations about the job before employees start. When employees have realistic expectations, they experience greater job satisfaction and engagement.

Question 24: D

Peer-to-peer recognition is most effective when integrated as a continuous practice, fostering a culture of appreciation. Limiting it to annual reviews reduces impact. It should complement, not replace, other recognition forms.

Question 25: B

Workforce planning focuses on forecasting future talent needs and developing strategies to meet them. Combined with talent acquisition, this ensures the right people are in the right roles at the right time.

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