

## Sharing Time with Tim Wiepking, MBA, CMA, SHRM-CP



Tim Wiepking at Katmai, with bears behind him!

### Meet Tim Wiepking, MBA, CMA, SHRM-SCP

This is a story about one local Alaskan leader who started and worked a number of years in the accounting and finance areas who later became SHRM Certified. At some point after finding himself responsible for the Human Resources function, Tim decided to become SHRM certified.

Tim Wiepking, MBA, CMA, SHRM-SCP is currently a consultant in Anchorage, Alaska. He has served as a finance director, a controller, a chief operating officer and a budget analyst in the many years that he's worked in Alaska. He also oversaw aspects of Human Resources for approximately six years. Tim has professional certifications in Accounting, with a Certified Management Accountant (CMA) through the Institute of Management Accountants. He is also a SHRM Senior Certified Professional (SHRM-SCP) with the Society for Human Resource Management. When we asked if he would share his experiences with other Alaskan HR professionals, Tim was more than willing to share.

- 1. Q. State Council: When did you become certified through the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) and the Human Resource Certification Institute (HRCI)?**

**A. Tim Wiepking:** Originally I earned my SPHR (*Senior Professional in Human Resources with HRCI*) in 2003 after taking the Anchorage SHRM (ASHRM) Chapter preparation class. More recently, I added the SHRM-SCP which I have maintained while dropping the SPHR credential.
- 2. Q. State Council: What motivated you to pursue the SHRM certification?**

**A. Tim Wiepking:** I was in a position where I was both a controller and head of corporate HR for a multi-state business. Fortunately, I had knowledgeable reports and access to outside legal advice so I didn't crash performing the HR functions. After meeting the on-the-job time requirements (*to be eligible to take the exam*), I decided to earn the certification. Previously, I had earned an MBA and passed four tests to become a CMA, Certified Management Accountant so my study skills were intact.

**3. Q. Council: How did you prepare for the exam?**

**A. Wiepking:** I attended the ASHRM training to pass the SPHR test and had purchased SHRM study materials. Roberta Goughnour was heading up the training at that time. It was a group study session which met to discuss the material with question and answer and group interaction. I believe the test back then was done on clay tablets.

**4. Q. Council: Has the SHRM certification helped you do your Finance related roles better or differently?**

**A. Wiepking:** I believe this works for most professions; the skill sets you need as one progresses with managing and hopefully leading others is different than what you needed in your original position. While the certification doesn't help me run an Excel sheet better, it makes me a better manager and gives me credibility when discussing issues with senior managers. Also, completing a payroll or 401K form 5500 has both an accounting and an HR aspect to it, so in those cases the professions overlap.

**5. Q. Council: Did any of the SHRM educational resources help you in your progression as a Finance leader?**

**A. Wiepking:** Subsequent to my first HR position, I have worked for some fairly small businesses where I would search for answers, models or ideals from SHRM. Maybe more importantly, in going to the chapter lunch meetings, conferences or webinars I was subsequently helped by the knowledge gained even if I could not attribute it to a specific learning event.

**6. Q. Council: Do you have an example to share---where your HR certification or SHRM's resources and data helped you gain a different or new perspective in any of your Finance projects?**

**A. Wiepking:** In one company I worked for, I calculated the turnover for one entry level, but a critical position was at 500 percent a year. The managers did not want to increase pay. Ultimately, we decided to pay more and to have automatic pay raises at 30, 90 and 180 days, unless the manager protested, then going onto the normal review cycle. The reduction in turnover more than paid for itself and perhaps more importantly the managers were spending much more time being managers and not stepping into the breach performing the labor to get the job done or spending time hiring the next person. A pure financial analysis may not have come up with the same solution.

**7. Q. Council: Is there any particular area of HR that interested you the most? Was there an HR area where you tended to use SHRM resources more in your Finance role?**

**A. Wiepking:** Deploying labor has always interested me, budgeting labor, labor productivity and labor skills. Visualizing a venn diagram, this is one of the areas of overlap between accounting/finance and HR. There are lots of times where financial skills are not applicable to the problem presented especially as I mentioned in an earlier example as one progresses in their career.

**8. Q. Council: What tips or advice can you share with others who are considering SHRM Certification as a dual certification outside their primary role (if they're in a non-HR role)? What advice would you offer to others considering taking the SHRM certification exam?**

**A. Wiepking:** If a portion of your current role involves aspects of HR or if what you see HR doing is more interesting than your current role it may makes sense to go after certification. It does take time and effort and if you have been out of school for a while, your study skills may be a little rusty. The ASHRM study classes were very useful for me and force a bit of study discipline, I would highly recommend taking them.

**9. Q. Council: Recertification: What was your experience in maintaining your certification and applying for recertification? (e.g. was it fairly simple and straightforward to you?—some professional sessions with PDCs/credits are available at minimal to no cost)**

**A. Wiepking:** Lately there have been so many webinars to earn credits so I have used them. In the past I used a mix of the monthly lunch meetings, state conferences and documented on-the-job activities for credits.

**10. Q. Council: Is there anything else you want to share with HR professionals, other Finance professionals, executives or leaders about whether or not to consider using the SHRM website, the educational resources or taking the certification exam?**

**A. Wiepking:** I'm surprised more finance people have not gone for SHRM certification. In many or most smaller businesses the accounting people are managing the HR function, admittedly mostly from a paperwork compliance role. Certification is a way to broaden that role from just filing the W4 forms.