Competency Backgrounder

HayGroup®

Contents

OVERVIEW

Understanding competencies	The purpose of this Competency Backgrounder is to help you understand what competencies are all about.
What's driving us?	In today's dynamic working environment, the implementation of competencies is intended to enhance and sustain a quality workforce, one that will continue to deliver high quality service, and provide better service and solutions to clients.
Searching for performance	Knowing that superior performance is so valuable, managers and human resources professionals have always searched for qualities such as "initiative" and "communication skills" in the people that they hired. However, two things remained uncertain until recently:

* How to assess these qualities

* Whether these qualities were actually related to successful performance on the job

Using a competency-based approach is the key to defining, assessing and linking such qualities to job performance.

Research-based approach	Fifty years of research in the field of applied psychology have shown that there are distinct differences between typical performers and superior performers in jobs. Superior performers don't just do more work, or better work, they often approach their jobs differently, think about things in a different manner, and do some critical things much more often than typical performers.

The results of this research are not a surprise to most of us. We can all identify with the fact that some individuals perform better than others. Each of us can think of examples of people we have seen who get superior results in their jobs by doing some things differently, or more often, than others.

Working smarter, not harder	*This isn't about working harder, it's about working better.* Studies have shown that top performers do the work of almost 1.5 average performers. Knowing what makes the difference in our business, and being able to deliver that difference, is the key. This is why we are introducing competencies. We want to use approaches that are objective and fair for all of us, and that help us grow as individuals and contribute to our ongoing success.

WHAT ARE COMPETENCIES?

What are competencies?	Competencies are a way to identify what really makes a difference in performance on the job. They are the characteristics that drive performance. When people can identify more clearly what is expected in terms of behaviour on the job, then they can do their job better. Similarly, managers can be more objective and provide the appropriate coaching to support employees in their personal growth.
Competency definition	A competency is defined as:

A competency is any skill, knowledge,
behaviour or other personal characteristic that is
*essential to perform the job **and that differentiates***
outstanding from typical performance.

Competencies are what outstanding performers do more often, in more situations, and with better results than typical performers.

Two types of competencies	There are two types of competencies – *behavioural* and *technical* – as outlined in the table below:

Technical Competencies	Behavioural Competencies
• What a person needs to know and be able to do (knowledge and skills) to perform the job	• The behaviours a person demonstrates in applying their knowledge and skills on the job

In other words, technical competencies are WHAT a person needs to know or know how to do, and *behavioural* competencies are HOW an individual approaches his or her work.

Technical competencies are necessary to perform the job role; however, they are not the differentiating factors of performance. While each is important, it is the *behavioural* competencies that truly differentiate superior from average performers.

WHAT ARE COMPETENCIES?, CONTINUED

Focusing on behavioural competencies

The focus for us is the on the behavioural competencies. We are going to put effort here because higher levels of performance in this area will help us maximize our performance. This does not mean that we will not continue to develop and maintain our technical skills. It simply means we have another powerful tool we can use to maintain and enhance the quality service we provide.

What is a competency model?

A competency model is the set of behavioural competencies (typically 8-12 competencies) that have been identified as the drivers of superior performance in specific role – they are the ones that truly make the difference in performance for that role.

While many of the behaviours across all behavioural competencies are helpful in each job role, the ones included in a given competency model can be considered as the "all-stars" for your role.

COMPONENTS OF A COMPETENCY

Components of a competency

For each competency there is a *definition* or description of what it means and a *scale of behaviours* called a competency measurement scale. These are described in more detail below

Definition

The definition or description of each competency is important because it captures the essence of the competency and helps everyone understand the competency in the same way.

Behavioural scales

The behavioural scale attached to a competency describes the various levels of behaviour associated with a competency – what the competency "looks like" at each level. The scales are numbered in ascending order: 1, 2, 3, 4, and so on, and each scale typically includes 4-6 levels.

Each level on the scale starts with a **bolded statement** that describes the *underlying intent* of the level. The levels are incremental and additive, which means that to perform the behaviours at any one level, you must be able to perform the behaviours at the level(s) preceding it. In addition, the degree of complexity increases as one moves "up" the scale.

Each level has a series of behaviours associated with it that describe what that particular level of performance looks like. These are not exhaustive as they vary depending on the nature and circumstances of the position. The behavioural indicators are provided only to help you better understand what each level in the scale is about.

The behaviours in the scale are *observable* and *measurable*. In other words, you can see yourself or others performing at each level, and the behaviours at each level are more complex or challenging than the behaviours in the level(s) preceding it. This is the key. What we can describe we can measure, fulfilling our need for a more definitive and objective way of determining how well we are doing.

COMPONENTS OF A COMPETENCY?, CONTINUED

Competency example

Influencing Others

The ability to persuade, convince, influence or gain the commitment of others (individuals or groups) to get them to accept a point of view, adopt a specific direction, commit to an idea, come to consensus on mutually beneficial agreements, or take a course of action. The key is understanding others, and using that understanding to have a specific impact or effect on them.

1. **Uses direct persuasion**
   - Makes clear, logical and succinct arguments to convince others when presenting own position.
   - Takes several steps to persuade, which can include careful preparation of data, documentation or facts to support a position in a presentation or discussion.
   - Guides others to the desired outcome through a logical sequence of arguments.
   - Outlines the pros and cons of alternative options or approaches.

2. **Adapts actions or words to the audience**
   - Makes *different* types of arguments or points in a presentation or discussion to influence others.
   - Tailors a presentation or discussion to appeal to the interest and level of others.
   - Adapts communication style to meet customers' and stakeholders' needs/interests (e.g., pricing vs. efficacy).
   - Anticipates how others will respond and takes a well thought out, tailored approach in order to have specific impact; adapts language, tone, style and content to the interest and level of the audience; "sells" own ideas by linking them to the values, needs and goals of others.
   - Optimizes communications to achieve desired results and deliver a compelling message using whatever medium is most appropriate (e.g., group facilitation, written communication, presentation, social media).

3. **Uses customized influence strategies**
   - Develops influence strategies based on a full understanding of customers, key decision makers and other relevant people.
   - Takes multiple steps to influence, with each step adapted to the specific audience; negotiates skillfully in situations with both internal and external groups to engage and rally others to buy into their ideas.
   - Effectively leverages the credibility and expertise of company resources (e.g., Sales Specialist, manager, etc.) to help influence key decision makers.
   - Anticipates areas where support or influence will be required, and takes steps to involve key stakeholders in the process when required.
   - Seeks to align the interests of all relevant stakeholders to create mutually beneficial agreements.
   - Uses chains of indirect influence or solicits and engages the support of like-minded individuals to help persuade others.

4. **Uses complex indirect influence strategies**
   - Builds coalitions of "behind the scenes" support to gain momentum for initiatives.
   - Uses an understanding of key internal and external stakeholders to gain buy-in and agreement.
   - Actively engages others – credible resources, experts or other third parties within the health care industry – as part of a broader influence strategy (e.g., arranges for a thought leader to speak with other customers about our products/services) to effectively influence key decision makers.
   - Uses an in-depth understanding of the interactions within a group or between groups to move towards a specific agenda.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?

Benefits of competencies	There are a number of benefits of competency-based approach to performance that make competencies a win-win situation for all of us. These benefits are outlined in the table below:

Training and Development	☑ Provides you with more focused training and the basis for better development planning
	☑ Provides managers with more focus for coaching and leads to partnership with employees
Career Management	☑ Helps you better understand the needs of other jobs and what you need to get there in addition to the technical skills you have
Staffing	☑ Provides a better template for job search and selection
	☑ Helps ensure better initial job/person fit
	☑ Leads to greater personal satisfaction for you as the employee
Performance Management	☑ Leads to more meaningful, objective feedback
	☑ Provides more options to understand your performance and development requirements
	☑ Removes the personal bias as much as possible from the performance management process