Competency Profiling

What is a Competency?

A competency is defined as behaviour or set of behaviours that describes excellent performance in a particular work context (e.g., job, role or group of jobs, function, or whole organisation). Excellent performers on-the-job demonstrate these behaviours much more consistently than average or poor performers. Competencies provide significant help with key problems such as:

- Clarifying workforce standards and expectations.
- Aligning individuals, teams and managers with the organization's business strategies.
- Creating empowerment, accountability and alignment of coach, team member and employer in performance development.
- Developing equitable, focused appraisal and compensation decision.

How do competencies differ from skills and knowledge?

Competencies only include behaviors that demonstrate excellent performance. Therefore, they do not include knowledge, but do include "applied" knowledge or the behavioral application of knowledge that produces success. In addition, competencies do include skills, but only the manifestation of skills that produce success. Finally, competencies are not work motives, but do include observable behaviors related to motives.

Competency models can be organized as flexible tools that can be used to support various practices such as:
- Employee orientation
- Employee development
- Performance management and coaching
- Career strategies
- Candidate interviews
- Team assessment
- Succession planning

Competencies are generally presented with a definition and key behavioural indicators.

For example the following are the definitions and behavioural characteristics required for Customer Service Orientation

Definition and Behaviours

Responds to customer's needs in a manner that provides added value and generates significant customer satisfaction.

- Demonstrates a deep understanding of internal and external customers and their needs.
- Mobilizes the appropriate resources to respond to customers' needs.
- Takes personal responsibility for customer satisfaction (eg. focuses on value added interactions).
- Builds credibility and trust with the customer through open and direct communication (eg. uses effective listening skills, provides timely feedback etc.).
- Ensures that customers believe their issues and concerns are given highest priority.

Competencies do not include "baseline" skills and knowledge (i.e., commonly expected performance characteristics such as finishing assigned work, answering the telephone, writing follow-up letters, etc.), job tasks, or unusual or idiosyncratic behaviors that may contribute to a single individual's success.

Benefits of implementing a competency-based approach

For The Company, competency-based practices:

- Reinforce corporate strategy, culture and vision.
- Establish expectations for performance excellence resulting in a systematic approach to professional development, improved job satisfaction and better employee retention.
- Increase the effectiveness of training and professional development programs by linking them to the success criteria (i.e., behavioural standards of excellence).
- Provide common, organization wide standards for career levels that enable employees to move across business boundaries.

For Managers, competency-based practices:

- Identify performance criteria to improve the accuracy and ease of the hiring and selection process.
- Provide more objective performance standards.
- Clarify standards of excellence for easier communication of performance expectations to direct reports.
- Provide a clear foundation for dialogue to occur between the manager and employee about performance, development and career related issues.

For Employees, competency-based practices:

- Identify the success criteria (i.e., behavioural standards of performance excellence) required to be successful in their role.
- Support a more specific and objective assessment of their strengths and specify

targeted areas for professional development.

- Provide developmental tools and methods for enhancing their skills.

- Provide the basis for a more objective dialogue with their manager or team about performance, development and career related issues.

Development of Competency models

Competency models are developed through a process of clarifying the business strategy and determining how the models would be used (e.g., hiring and selection, assessment, performance management, training and development, and career development, etc.). Data is then gathered through structured interviews and analyzed and are used to develop success models. Validation surveys are then administered and models refined based on feedback. Finally, models are finalized and translated into appropriate, end-user tools and applications.

One of the most important developments in human resources is the clarification of the "business value" of key programs. These kinds of impacts improve talent levels, save money, and improve business performance.