

how requirements can potentially change over time. The competencies assessed in the process should be sufficiently general to address both present and future organizational needs.

## Nature of Competencies

A competency is an underlying characteristic of an individual that contributes to job or role performance and to organizational success.<sup>28</sup> Competencies specific to a particular job are the familiar KSAO requirements established through job requirements job analysis. Competency requirements may extend beyond job-specific ones to those of multiple jobs, general job categories, or the entire organization. These competencies are much more general or generic KSAOs, such as technical expertise or adaptability. A competency model is a combination of the several competencies deemed necessary for a particular job or role.

Despite the strong similarities between competencies and KSAOs, there are two notable differences. First, competencies may be job spanning, meaning that they contribute to success in multiple jobs. Members of a work team, for example, may each hold specific jobs within the team but may be subject to job-spanning competency requirements, such as adaptability and teamwork orientation. Such requirements ensure that team members will interact successfully with one another and will even perform portions of others' jobs if necessary. As another example, competency requirements may span jobs within the same category, such as sales jobs or managerial jobs. All sales jobs may have product knowledge as a competency requirement, and all managerial jobs may require planning and results orientation. Such requirements allow for greater flexibility in job placements and job assignments within the category.

Second, competencies can contribute not only to job performance but also to organizational success. These are very general competencies applicable to, and required for, all jobs. They serve to align requirements for all jobs with the mission and goals of the organization. A restaurant, for example, may have "customer focus" as a competency requirement for all jobs as a way of indicating that servicing the needs of its customers is a key component of all jobs.

### Competency Example

An illustration of the competency approach to job requirements is shown in Exhibit 4.15. The Green Care Corporation produces several lawn maintenance products. The organization is in a highly competitive industry. To survive and grow, it has product innovation and product reliability as its core mission; its goals are to achieve 10% annual growth in revenues and 2% growth in market share. To help fulfill its mission and goals, the organization has established four general (strategic) workforce competencies—creativity/innovation, technical expertise, customer focus, and results orientation. These requirements are part of every job in the organization. At the business unit (gas lawn mowers) level, the orga-