

## Collecting Competency Information

Techniques and processes for collecting competency information are continually being developed.<sup>32</sup> General competencies at the organization (strategic) level are likely to be established by top management, with guidance from strategic HR managers. At a minimum, effective establishment of general competency requirements would seem to demand the following. First, it is crucial that the organization establish its mission and goals prior to determining competency requirements; this will help ensure that general competencies are derived from knowledge of mission and goals, much as job-specific competencies are derived from previously identified job tasks. Second, the general competencies should be truly important at all job levels so that their usage as job requirements will focus and align all jobs with the organization's mission and goals. This principle also holds in the case where general competency requirements are at the strategic business unit or subunit level instead of the organization level. Third, all general competencies should have specific behavioral definitions, not just labels. These definitions provide substance, meaning, and guidance to all concerned.

For job-spanning competencies, these definitions will necessarily be more task specific. To ensure effective identification and definition, several tasks should be undertaken. First, it is crucial to know the major tasks for which the competencies are to be established, meaning that some form of job analysis should occur first. For now, the organization will have to craft that process since we lack prototypes or best-practice examples as guidance. Second, SMEs familiar with all the jobs or roles to which the competencies will apply should be part of the process. Third, careful definition of the competencies will be necessary. Acquiring definitions from other organizations, consultants, or O\*NET will be useful here. Training programs can improve the quality of competency information. Specifically, managers who attended a program that included an explanation of the competency modeling approach, specific guidance in translating the required behaviors of a role into competencies, and feedback on the quality of practice exercises produced competency data that were more accurate, more detailed, and more consistent across raters relative to competency data produced by managers who had not received training.<sup>33</sup>

When competency modeling first appeared, staffing experts expressed concern about the lack of agreement across multiple raters when evaluating the same job's competencies. One rater might claim that a job entailed a high level of interpersonal skill, while another might emphasize the analytical demands of the job. Increasingly, it has been recognized that this inconsistency might be an accurate reflection of the many ways people can do the same job.<sup>34</sup> In particular, in complex jobs with high levels of personal autonomy and discretion, different job incumbents engage in completely different behaviors requiring completely different skills. Competency data may be more likely to show differences across raters than job requirements analysis because competency analysis is more likely to focus on complex jobs with high autonomy. Indeed, evidence suggests that decisions based

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