

## WHAT IS COMPETENCY?

- Competencies refer to skills or knowledge that lead to superior performance. These are formed through an individual/organization's knowledge, skills and abilities and provide a framework for distinguishing between poor performances through to exceptional performance. Competencies can apply at organizational, individual, team, and occupational and functional levels. Competencies are individual abilities or characteristics that are key to effectiveness in work.
- Competencies are the characteristics of a manager that lead to the demonstration of skills and abilities, which result in effective performance within an organizational area.
- Once the job requirements have been clarified (and competencies provide a framework for doing this), then competency interviewing helps interviewers look for evidence of those requirements in each candidate. For people already in jobs, competencies provide a way to help identify opportunities for growth within their jobs.
- Competencies are not "fixed"—they can usually be developed with effort and support (though some are harder to develop than others). Employees and their managers together can identify which competencies would be most helpful to work on to improve the employee's effectiveness. They can then integrate that into a learning plan that may include on-the-job experience, classroom training, or other developmental activities.
- Competencies are not a tool to be used for evaluating people for layoffs. Competencies are only a way of talking about what helps people get results in their jobs. What matters is performance— being effective and meeting job expectations.

**Some examples of competencies required by the employees are: -**

- **Adaptability**
- **Commitment**
- **Creativity**
- **Motivation**
- **Foresight**
- **Leadership**
- **Independence**
- **Emotional Stability**
- **Analytical Reasoning and**
- **Communication Skills**

# A case in a box

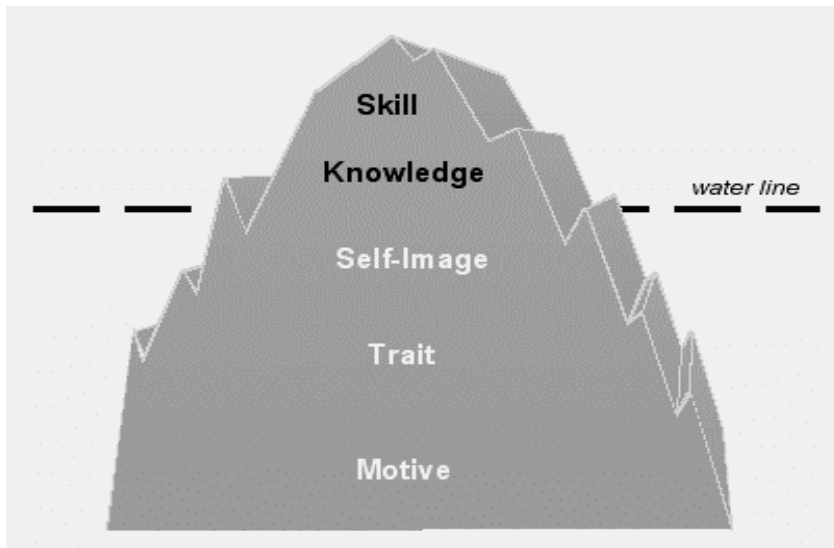
**Different teachers/lecturers have different kinds of competencies. Some teachers have good communication skills, some of them have excellent presentation skills, some of them have expert knowledge in their area of specialization through their long terms of service in some organization and some of them have the competencies to understand their students and their social, emotional, and intellectual needs**

*List down some of the competencies of a teacher/leader that has inspired you the most?*

## COMPETENCY ICEBERG MODEL

It can be helpful to think of competencies in terms of an iceberg. Technical competencies are at the tip - the portion above the waterline that is clearly visible (and therefore easier to assess).

Behavioral competencies are below the waterline - they are more difficult to assess, and often harder to develop. Behavioral competencies can be understood as manifestations of how a person views him or herself (**self-image**), how he or she typically behaves (**traits**), or motives him or her (**motives**).



**Skill:** - A person's ability to do something well. For example, is great at using Microsoft Word.

**Knowledge:** - Information that a person uses in a particular area. For example, this might differentiate the outstanding waiter or waitress who speaks many languages from his or her average counterpart in a restaurant with an international clientele.

**Self-image:** - A person's view of him or herself, identity, personality and worth. For example, seeing oneself as a leader, or as a developer of people.

**Trait:** - A typical aspect of a person's behavior. For example, being a good listener.

**Motive:** - What drives someone's behavior in a particular area (an underlying need for achievement, affiliation or power).

## WHY COMPETENCIES?

As global business competition shifts from efficiency to innovation and from enlargement of scale to creation of value, management needs to be oriented towards the strategic use of human resources.

Under these circumstances, the ability of companies to effectively carry out competency-based human resources management (HRM) is becoming more and more crucial for their survival. A competency based HRM system captures the differing worth of individual contributors, facilitates multiple career paths and allows flexibility in reward-related decisions, which are important to address with the changing nature of organizations.

The field of competency development is growing in popularity with administrative management in businesses and agencies worldwide. One important reason to collect data and build competency models is that they are powerful decision-making tools.

Reasons why competencies are needed: -

- The best way to understand performance is to observe what people actually do to be successful rather than relying on assumptions pertaining to trait and intelligence.
- The best way to measure and predict performance is to assess whether people have key competencies.
- Competencies can be learnt and developed.
- They should be made visible/accessible
- They should be linked to meaningful life outcomes that describe how people should perform in the real world

For example, one application of competency models with potentially long-term benefits is employee selection. Using competency-based interviewing techniques, hiring managers can determine if an individual has the knowledge and skills needed to be effective in the future

## CLASSIFICATION OF COMPETENCIES

*Through this learning head you will gain knowledge of the types of competencies and the importance of each type at different application levels*

### **Core Competencies**

A core competency is defined as an internal capability that is critical to the success of business. These are organizational competencies that all individuals are expected to possess. These competencies define what the organization values the most in people.

For example: - an organization might want each individual to possess teamwork, flexibility and communication skills.

The goal of the core competencies is for individuals to be able to perform in a diverse number of positions throughout the organization.

For example, for a manufacturer of electronic equipment, key areas of expertise could be in the design of the electronic components and circuits. For a ceramics manufacturer, they could be the routines and processes at the heart of the production process. For a software company the key skills may be in the overall simplicity and utility of the program for users or alternatively in the high quality of software code writing they have achieved.

Core Competencies are not seen as being fixed. Core Competencies should change in response to changes in the company's environment. They are flexible and evolve over time. As a business evolves and adapts to new circumstances and opportunities, so its Core Competencies will have to adapt and change.

## **THRESHOLD Vs DIFFERENTIATING AND JOB SPECIFIC/FUNCTIONAL Vs BEHAVIORAL COMPETENCIES**

### **Professional Competencies or functional competencies**

These distinctive competencies are grouped for each job within the organization. The goal is to optimize performance by having the technical skills to perform a job.

A trainer requires a different set of competencies than an accountant, and a teller requires a different set than a maintenance worker. If there are different levels within the same position, then each job level might also have its own set of vertically derived competencies

- **Behavioral Competencies**

These refer to competencies that are required by people in terms of behavior.

Team working is an example of competency required by an employee working in a typing group in an office where they may be required to cover up for others as the work grows

- **Threshold competencies**

The characteristics required by a jobholder to perform a job effectively are called threshold competencies

For the position of a typist it is necessary to have primary knowledge about typing, which is a threshold competency

- **Differentiating competencies**

The characteristics, which differentiate superior performers from average performers, come under this category; such characteristics are not found in average performers.

Knowledge of formatting is a competency that makes a typist to superior to others in performance, which is a differentiating competency

## **HOW IS COMPETENCY MEASURED?**

All competencies are defined from levels in a competency framework. Each definition typically expresses the behavior expected of the associates if he were to be rated at that level.

Using BARS to measure competency

### **Behavioral-Anchored Rating Scales (BARS):**

A **BARS** describes behaviors differentiating between effective and ineffective performers that can be observed and anchors them at points on a scale. The applicant's behavior displayed (e.g. role-play, oral presentation, in-basket) or past behavior described (e.g. behavioral interview, reference checks) are compared to these examples and rated accordingly. The content of the scale is developed from a job analysis and is based on responses to critical job incidents or situations. The scale used is usually a 3-Point or 5-Point scale but could also be narrative if appropriate.

### **Developing a BARS Scale**

Using subject matter experts, identify examples of job performance behaviors reflecting all different levels of effectiveness ranging from ineffective to superior for all the different parts of the job. These are key indicators only. It is not required to be an exhaustive list of every possible criterion. You may have already identified these behaviors when you conducted your job analysis to establish the qualifications and competencies. If so, use them here.

## **Sample: Customer Service Information Officer**

**Competency:** Customer Service Orientation implies a desire to identify and serve customers/clients, It means focusing one's efforts on discovering and meeting the needs of the customer/client.

### **Rating using BARS**

#### **4 ( Superior )**

The applicant must exhibit all these behaviors to rated as superior

- Did not interrupt the client
- Took notes but maintained interest and eye contact
- Asked probing questions to ensure understanding
- Remained patient when the client struggled with the language.
- Paraphrased the client's statements to ensure understanding.
- Reflected the client's thoughts for verification.
- Provided complete and clear information / service given the problem.
- Offered specific referrals (names, addresses, phone numbers) on client's other problems

#### **3 (Adequate)**

The applicant must exhibit all these behaviors to pass ...

- Showed empathy for the client's problems.
- Took notes.
- Obtained the required information.
- Provided adequate information / service for a problem resolution.

#### **2 (Ineffective)**

The applicant fails if he or she exhibits any four of the following plausible but inappropriate behaviors ...

- Displayed boredom or lack of empathy.
- Took no notes of the client's information.
- Failed to obtain accurate or complete information.
- Provided inappropriate information or service given the problem.
- Interrupted the client.
- Did not prompt for further understanding.
- Displayed impatience when the client struggled with language.
- Did not check understanding.
- Did not try to help or understand client's other problems.