

Competency-Based Training

A Guide to Achieving
Your Organization's Strategic Goals

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Competency-Based Training

What We're Going to Cover:

- What is competency-based training?
- Competencies - structure and approach
- Competency models
- Assessment
- Development
- Competency development strategies

What is a Competency?

Simply defined, a competency is a specific skill, trait or attribute that meets the following criteria:

- Is behavioral
- Is part of a larger skill set or discipline
- Can be learned or developed
- Identifies "what can be done" vs. "what is known"

The Origin of Competencies

In the context of employee learning and development, competencies originate in an organization's strategic goals and operational priorities. Competent organizations plan effectively and achieve their plans. In the same way, competent employees perform their roles effectively and contribute directly to organizational goal achievement.

Two Types of Competencies

There are two principal types of competencies- general and technical. Let's break these down:



General

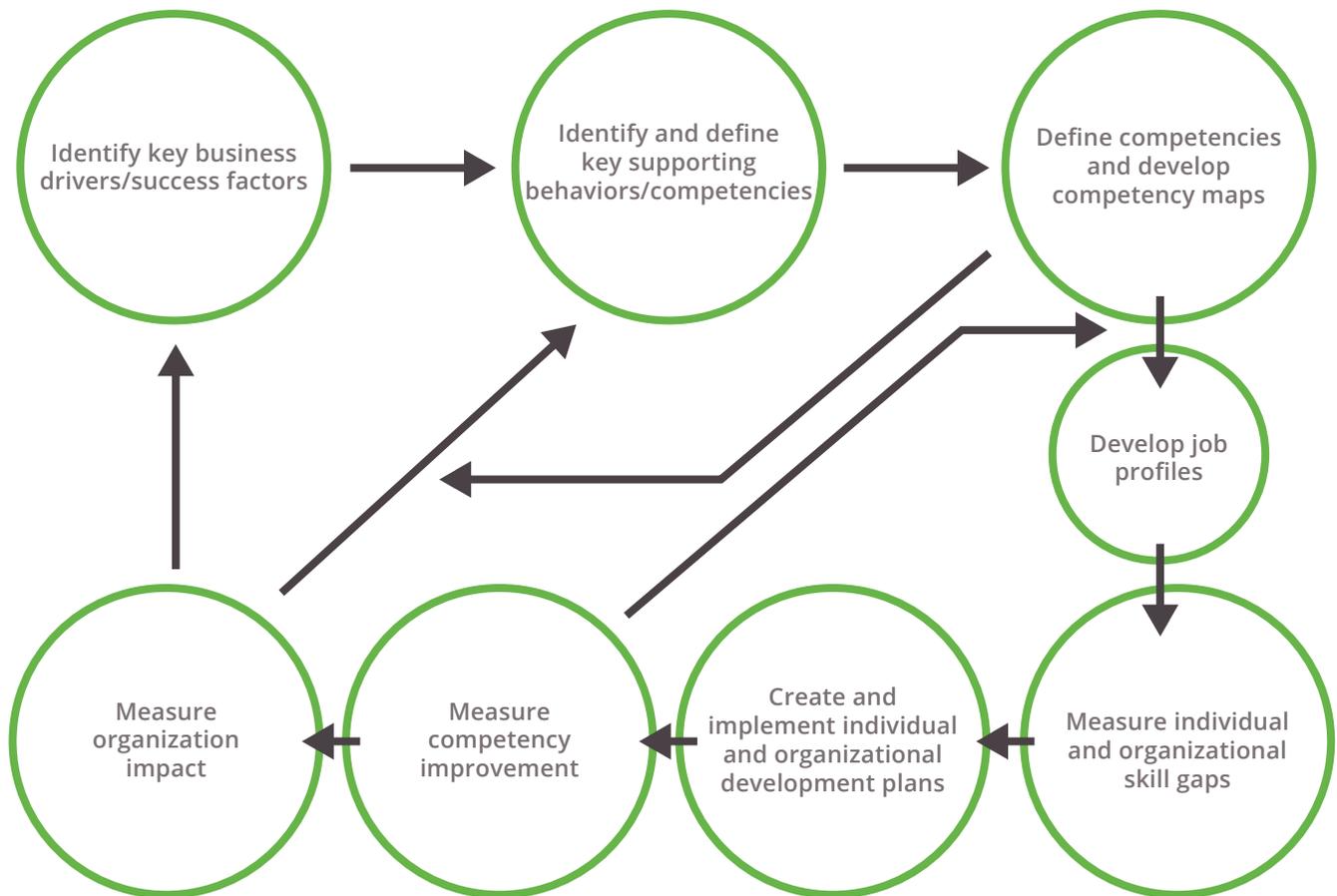


Technical

General Competencies: Address skills relevant to broad groups of individuals, regardless of job role. For example, communication and leadership skills.

Technical Competencies: Address skills relevant to specific job roles or families of job roles.

The Competency Cycle



Putting the Competency Cycle to Work

Don't look at the Competency Cycle as something that has a beginning and an end. You may not need to start at the beginning, and your work developing competencies will never be over. Your version of the Competency Cycle must change and evolve with your organization and its business environment and ecosystem.

The entire Competency Cycle is very powerful, and every step will set you up for additional organizational success. Even partial implementation will still yield results.

What is Competency-Based Training?

So where does training fit in when we're talking about competencies? The best competency-based training programs focus on specific workplace behaviors that are essential to achieving strategic organizational goals.

The ultimate goal of your competency-based training program should be to tie every development program to specific competencies, measure skills gaps and identify needed training to close skills gaps and increase competency.

Identifying Business Drivers and Supporting Behaviors

An important part of implementing competency-based training in your organization is identifying the competencies that will drive your business and the behaviors that support those competencies. We'll provide some examples of both of these measures.

The Definition of Core Competencies

- Provides potential access to a wide variety of markets.
- Makes significant contributions to perceived customer value.
- Are difficult for competitors to emulate.

The Definition of Business Drivers and Behavioral Competencies

- Lays the foundation for the organization's successful delivery of its products and services.
- Provides tangible, quantitative demonstration of the organization's goals and objectives.
- Contributes to (and helps define) the organization's core competencies.

How to Define Competencies

Defining competencies in your organization doesn't have to be complicated. You simply need to start with the discipline you're working in and work your way down. It's also possible to start with the demonstration and work your way up. Here's a template we like to use and an example of how to fill it:



DISCIPLINE

Skill Area
Skill (Competency)

(Example)

Task
Demonstration



COMMUNICATION

Meeting Facilitation
Meeting Organization

(Example)

Utilizing an Agenda
Keeping a meeting on track and on schedule concerning the meeting agenda



CYBERSECURITY

Cyber Risk Management
Risk Assessment

(Example)

Conducting a vulnerability scan
Effectively uses automated and manual tools and techniques in a structured process to identify potential information system vulnerabilities.

Competency and Maturity

A competency may have a different meaning at different levels of employee role and maturity. There are four levels of maturity when it comes to competencies. You'll need to train employees to effectively move through the levels of maturity.

The Four Levels of Competency Maturity



AWARENESS



DEVELOPMENT



PROFICIENCY



MASTERY

Discipline and skill areas will remain consistent across all levels of maturity. However, skills, tasks and demonstrations will typically evolve with maturity.

Who Develops These Things, Anyway?

Defining competencies and creating a competency map requires a structured process. Subject matter experts (SMEs) in their respective fields help define competencies, tasks and demonstrations, are assisted by process experts.

Capturing detailed competency definitions helps frame an organization's intellectual capital. You'll want to have a mix of common knowledge across your industry and proprietary knowledge that's specific to your organization.

Your competency map will be a "living document" that changes and evolves as the business environment changes and evolves.

Constructing Job Profiles

Using your competency map, it's now time to construct your job profiles. These profiles are typically centered around (but not exclusive to) the job's primary technical discipline. The profile will also likely include competencies from adjacent technical disciplines and general business competency sets.

Job profiles will have different shapes at different role maturity levels. The profile takes the competency map a step further and is the basis for establishing performance expectations and measuring achievement. Your job profile is considered a performance management tool, while your competency map is a reference document.

How much is too much?

There is no “magic number” regarding how many competencies to include in a job profile. However, addressing too many competencies at one time means nothing gets done well or fully. You’ll need to prioritize the competencies to be addressed based on:

- *Criticality to the organization*
- *Size of the skills gap*

You’ll need to continually review progress toward addressing skills gaps and realign competency focus as appropriate.

Using the job profile - assessing skills gaps

Up until this point, we’ve talked about skills gaps, but have never really defined them. A skills gap is the difference between a desired competency level and an actual level.

For individuals, a skills gap can be identified based on an objective, verifiable demonstration of behavior using the following tactics:

- *Self-assessment*
- *Supervisor or qualified third-party assessment*
- *Task-completion assessment*

For organizations, a skills gap will become apparent based on the aggregation of individual skills gaps.

Once all of your skills gaps are identified, the next critical step is to prioritize them. For individuals, this means you prioritize based on the biggest gaps or the most critical skills with gaps. For organizations, it will be the gaps shared by the largest numbers of individuals, as well as criticality.

What's Next?

Using Training to Support and Develop Competencies

Now that you've assessed your organizational and individual needs, identified skills gaps and have a prioritized list of competencies to develop and gaps to fill, it's time to create a development plan.

For your individuals, you need to improve their competency level compared to their job profile. At the organizational level, it's time to reduce critical organizational skills gaps. Effective development plans require the application of different types of learning. types of learning, including: formal and informal, expert-led, self-directed, learning interventions and on-the-job development.

Individual development plans should utilize available resources, and organizational development plans may require new resources or processes. You need to reassess the validity of competency improvement as a result of development plan implementation.

Things to look at...



Do the development activities result in actual changes in individual behavior/improvement in competency?

- *If yes, continue*
- *If no, reassess development activities and/or job profiles*



If individual behaviors change and competency improves, does that create meaningful change in organizational performance?

- *If yes, continue*
- *If no, reassess competencies and prioritization*



Is the change in organizational performance aligned with core business goals and objectives?

- *If yes, continue (but re-prioritize skills gaps as appropriate)*
- *If no, reassess competencies, job profiles and development activities*

Individual Choice vs Organizational Mandate

Organizations need to have a tight grasp on their own goals and objectives when deciding which competencies to develop in their employees. So, should individuals be able to choose which competencies they wish to develop?

First you'll need to answer two questions:

What is the organization's policy or philosophy on professional development?

How strongly does the organization tie individual competency to organizational goals and objectives?

Understand that tighter alignment between individual competency and organizational goals yields more predictable results, but requires greater effort.

Get Started With Competency-Based Training

Once you understand that competency-based training is a behavioral approach tied to critical organizational competencies, you'll have a better idea of what development will look like. Rigorous and dynamic development and application of competencies supports organizational performance in a changing world.

Competency-based training applies at the individual (micro) and organizational (macro) levels. You'll need to provide training that can encompass both organizational and individual goals and is readily available exactly when it's needed, not just at scheduled training times.

Once you're able to provide this type of training, you'll find building your competency-based training programs much more straightforward.

RECOMMENDED EBOOK



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