



## Three Steps to Linking Business to Talent

The Role of Competencies in Driving an Integrated Approach to Talent Management

### Competency Management Sets the Foundation

Effective competency management sets the foundation on which all other talent management initiatives are built. Thorough job analysis provides organizations with a common set of definitions and expectations that align all talent management initiatives. Regardless of what business strategies (business drivers) you employ, you need the right talent to execute. This means that all of your talent systems—from talent acquisition to performance management, from leadership and workforce development to succession planning—need to work together to ensure you are identifying and developing people with the right skills and motivations to move your business forward.

By aligning business drivers to competencies, each function works together to strive for consistency. So, how do you link your people strategies with your business strategies? It's more than just having a set of well-defined competencies at your disposal (although, that's a great start!).

### THREE STEPS TO TRANSLATING BUSINESS TO TALENT

- Define Business Challenge and link competencies
- Gain consensus among your business leaders
- Communicate and confirm competency and business driver alignment

#### 1. Define Business Challenges and Link Competencies

Whether your organization's challenge is growth, service excellence, or brand recognition, you need an effective way to link your people strategy to your business strategy. To be successful, you must:

- Articulate the business challenges individuals will face in critical roles throughout your organization
- Strive to understand what it takes for people to succeed in your future business environment
- Develop a plan to align all talent management systems in your process according to the talent lifecycle—ultimately, ensuring the organization's capability to succeed.

Start by defining the challenges your leaders and associates will face as they navigate the realities of the business. By isolating the key challenges, you can quickly wire the highest priority competencies required for success in a role or job family for the respective challenges. This will later enable you to build competency models tailored to fit and overcome the specific business challenges your leaders are facing. This is the most important point. Business drivers inform competencies, not vice versa.



## WORD OF CAUTION

Because business needs can change so rapidly, revisit these steps on a regular basis or as major changes to the business occur. By doing so, you will ensure your organization is able to successfully navigate the realities of the ever-changing business landscape.

## 2. Gain Consensus among your Business Leaders

All too often well-defined 'competencies' developed by human resources fail to resonate with strategy-setters because it is not part of their language or included in their plans. Worse yet, the business leaders fail to see the relevance of their top-of-mind objectives. This commonly results in a failure of senior executives driving the necessary changes when it comes time to implement your competency-based talent programs.

You can overcome this by involving your business leaders in discussions throughout all planning stages and be sure to start with the end in mind. Armed with your business challenges and logically-wired competencies derived from step 1, you are ready to engage your leaders in a strategic, business-related discussion before you build your competency models.

These conversations should be focused on the future priorities and requirements rather than looking in the rearview mirror. Instead of leading the discussion with HR-speak (i.e. competency language, behaviors, motivations, etc.), begin by reviewing your business challenges and gaining consensus with the priority rankings.

Your role as the facilitator in this process is to ensure there is agreement on the most important challenges that ultimately impact your talent. By gaining agreement in this step, you will establish focus and ensure a clear connection to the business drivers.

## 3. Communicate and Confirm Competency and Business Driver Alignment

Now that you've already aligned the competencies to the prioritized business drivers, ensure you reinforce and demonstrate the importance by creating and communicating a comprehensive view of the competencies and what it takes to be successful. Be sure to:

- Insert your talent expertise--share your research and rationale regarding the competencies that will allow your talent to meet the business challenges
- Articulate and gain additional reinforcement—demonstrate why the wired competencies support the designated business drivers, ultimately helping to achieve the leaders' objectives
- Finalize an accurate, business-driven competency model

Once these steps are complete, you will be ready to develop a plan to integrate your competencies into all of your talent systems. By involving the business leaders in the steps above, you'll increase your chances of delivering on the promise--linking business strategy to talent management initiatives.

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