

DEVELOPING COMPETENCIES

Tasks and Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs)

Competencies evolve from the identification of KSAs and other characteristics. KSAs are developed after identifying important job tasks.

Definitions:

Tasks – are a coordinated succession of work activities used to produce a distinguishable and discernable output that can be independently used or consumed.

Knowledge – is a body of information, usually of a factual or procedural type, that is applied directly to the successful performance of a task.

Skill – describes a present observable capability or competence to perform a job operation with precision. Performance is usually based on a learned psychomotor act and implies a standard that is required for effective performance.

Ability – describes a more general capability or competence to perform an observable behavior or a behavior that is necessary to perform a job function resulting in an observable product.

Writing Task Statements:

- Describe activities (not knowledge, skills, and abilities)
- Have a certain beginning and end
- Represent activities performed by an individual worker
- Have an identifiable output or consequence
- Should be stated as not too broad or too specific

Writing KSA Statements:

- What is required; knowledge of what; skill at what; ability to do what?
- How is the KSA applied on the job; to what effect or in what context?
- Level at which or how much of or to what degree of accuracy is the KSA needed?
- Knowledge statements should include what, effect/context, and degree/level of knowledge needed.
- The degree/level of skill or ability can usually be inferred from the effect/context and may not need to be stated.

Examples of Task Statements:

- Evaluate manhole condition to provide information to be used in the development of an annual manhole repair and replacement program.
- Use design software and drawing tools such as AutoCADD and Microstation to prepare engineering designs and plans.

- Uncover sewer pipes using a backhoe to locate leak and efficiently and effectively complete a repair.

Examples of KSA Statements:

- Knowledge of advanced AutoCADD or Microstation software functions to design and draw plans for street repaving.
- Skill to operate a backhoe to safely remove earth from around damaged manhole conduit.
- Ability to communicate clearly and effectively with supervisors, co-workers, contractors, elected officials, and the public in order to outline and describe upcoming projects.

COMPETENCIES

Competencies - are the measurable, organizationally relevant, and behaviorally based capabilities of people. In this respect, they can be thought of as reflecting *the evolution of knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics* to descriptors that have become more specific, behavioral, and useful.

General or Core Competencies – are competencies that are required across a group of jobs or job families. They may or may not be attained through specialized training or experience.

Technical Competencies – are competencies that are required for a smaller number of jobs in a job family and are usually acquired through specialized training.

Distinguishing Competency Levels:

Scope:

- Span of control (internal and/or external; large or narrow)
- Number of people affected by the work product
- Whether work product directly affects customers/stakeholders or not

Complexity:

- Work is routine vs. customized
- Level/amount of professional/technical standards that exist and must be accounted for to complete work
- Amount of coordination that is required across people, departments, and/or the organization to complete work
- The number and variety of sources that must be consulted during and to complete work
- Degree of revision or change that the work is subject to
- Number of and level of demands/responsibilities that someone is held accountable for during and after work is completed
- Length and scope of the project(s)

Things to Remember when Creating Competency Models

- Job analysis techniques are used to identify key competencies and associated critical work behaviors.
- Determine the number of sets of competencies and performance standards that need to be developed.
- Novice developers often include too many competencies for an evaluation of reasonable length.
- A good approach for developing a competency model is to define a set of core competencies and a common set of performance standards to be used across all jobs. Then a specialized set of technical competencies can also be defined for individual job groups if necessary.
- Organizations usually identify 5 to 10 key competencies that are linked to their strategic objectives.
- It is important to articulate clearly how expectations change at different job levels as well as reflect more or less effective job performance at each level.
- Defining competencies behaviorally provides a solid basis for differentiating between employees who are performing more or less effectively than others.
- The primary advantage of defining competencies in terms of behavioral performance standards; 1) helps employees understand what is expected of them 2) to provide uniform standards that can be applied during evaluations.
- The competencies should be defined to reflect different levels of responsibilities, complexity and difficulty that characterize employees' jobs at different levels in the organization.

Competencies for Performance Evaluations

- Behavioral expectations – how an employee goes about getting the job done in conjunction with others, the team, the organization.
- Results expectations – goals for employees based on the organizations strategy (level specific). Account for developmental needs also.
- Inclusion of performance standards to guide ratings is considered a best practice in developing an effective performance management system.
- The most effective process is to establish a hierarchy of goals where each level supports goals relevant to the next level; based on an organizations strategic direction and priorities.
- Employees' commitment to goals is highly important and goals must be: Clearly defined with a direct and obvious link to the factors that make the organization successful, stretch the employees' limits and be achievable, limited to 3 areas at a time.
- Have effective and ongoing performance conversations.

Competencies – Core and Technical

Core Competency Example:

These sub-items can be combined into Communication. Each area may not be relevant for every job. These are examples of what items may make-up communication.

Communication:

- Conflict management – manages and resolves conflict or disagreement in a constructive manner.
- Customer service – Works and communicates with internal and external customers to assess needs, provide information/assistance, and resolve problems.
- Interpersonal – develops and maintains effective relationships with others, relates well to people from varied backgrounds, situations, cultures, ethnicities, gender, and disabilities, shows understanding friendliness, and sociability, effectively deals with difficult individuals.
- Oral – expresses information to individuals or groups effectively, asks and answers questions, practices active listening, recognizes non-verbal cues.
- Written - recognizes or uses correct English grammar, punctuation, and spelling; communicates information in a clear, accurate, succinct and organized manner.
- Reading - Understands and interprets written material, including technical material, rules, regulations, instructions, manuals, reports, charts, graphs, or tables; applies what is learned from written material to specific situations.

Technical Competency Example:

Technology:

- Applying and Using Technology - Uses machines, tools, or equipment effectively; uses technology to work more efficiently and improve work processes and products.
- Computers - Uses computers and various computer applications to analyze and communicate information in the appropriate format.

References

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