

Understanding Competency Models and Its Application

As more attention is channeled towards employees in an organization, their ability to perform in accordance to the organization's goal is important. Aligning all HR functions to the Competency Model of the organization is an important feature of the HR function

Competencies are not about the task or duties, rather it is about the people who perform the task or duties. Traditionally, much importance was placed on the Job Analysis which resulted in Job Description and emphasis was about completing the tasks stated to a certain requirement.

Many organizations today have come to terms that their most important asset are their people and taking measures in retaining and developing them to greater heights.

WHY COMPANIES USE COMPETENCY MODELS?

Companies recognize the importance of people resources and the importance identifying their skills gap. Using a Competency model allows a more objective method of assessing performance from observable behaviors that leads to talent management.

For instance, an observable behavior of a waiter in the work place would include accuracy in taking orders, serving the customers and ensuring the overall customer experience. This positive behavior is important to the organization in encouraging repeat business. The behavioral actions of the waiter that leads to repeat business are the acceptable behavior which are used in setting a stage to evaluate other waiters.

These observable behaviors must be aligned to the overall organizational business strategy. With a Competency Model in place, it would then create a framework for organizations to collect information relating to the Knowledge, Skills and Attitude.



By Sri Vahlson

The purpose of this article is to give readers a basic understanding of what Competencies are and how an effective Competency Model helps the organization grow. It starts with a development of a good Competency Model, as this would set the stage in which all behavioral actions are evaluated

As a practical guide, a Competency Model has many different designs but I wish to share one particular model;

1. **Core Competency**- supports the development of those critical core competencies that is usually shared in the form of the organization's Vision, Mission and Values.
2. **Functional Competencies**- these Competencies support the levels within the organization as well as the representing specific Competencies for each Department.
3. **Job Specific Competencies**- support the development of Technical, and Job specific Competencies.

Under the Functional and Job Specific Competencies, it is important to categorize two types of skills;

- **Hard Skills**- reflect on the Technical Requirements of the job. Example, Employee Relations Executive needs to have a good understanding of the Employment Laws especially when handling Union Negotiation or Termination.
- **Soft Skills**- Skills that complement in performing the hard skills effectively. Example, in the process of negotiating a Collective Agreement, an Employee Relations Executive needs to be fluent in Communication Skills and Negotiation Skills in order to ensure the negotiation ends well with a win-win situation.

Advantage of having a Competency Model is that it assists in all HR functions in the organization:

- Recruitment & Selection- ensure that candidates selected are aligned to the Core Competencies of the organization
- Performance Management- ensures that all employees are measured objectively
- Creates a clear 'roadmap' in Talent Management and Succession Planning.

CONCLUSION

In creating a sustainable road map, organizations need to develop a Competency Model that reflects on the organizations' commitment to people development. Consistent development of its people resources assist the organization to retain and develop its talents, and reduce turn over. In developing a Competency Model, it is further important to have state both the Hard Skills and Soft Skills especially in the Functional and Job Specific Levels. Aligning all Competency Models with the internal process of the organization is also important for a more sustainable workforce.

Writer's Profile

Sri Vahlsan is currently employed with The Malaysian Employers Federation's (MEF) training arm known as MEF Academy as Consultant Training & Education, for the past 10 years. He has conducted Training in the area of Competencies with some large Corporations in Malaysia such as Coca Cola, Electricity Board of Malaysia, Sony Electronics, Holiday Inn Hotels & Resorts to name a few. His specialization is in the area of HR, Competency Development, Customer Service and Management & Supervisory Development. Prior to working with MEF Academy, he had spent considerable number of years working in the Hotel and Education industry. He has been involved in preopening of Restaurants and a 5 star Hotel, right through to setting up a Training Department and developing Succession Plans for the organization. Academically he holds a Degree in Hospitality Management from Bournemouth University UK and Master in Management from Open University Malaysia specializing in Human Resource Management.