

Power**SHIFT**

Employer Resource

Tips and Strategies for
Hiring Talent from
Other Sectors and
Industries



Canada

Alberta

The Power of Competencies



Competencies are the skills and knowledge that an individual brings to a job. These competencies can be attained in many ways – through formal or informal training, life or work experiences, coaching and mentoring, and professional or personal roles and responsibilities. When focusing on competencies, we focus on proficiency – the individual’s ability to perform their tasks safely, efficiently, and effectively. The skills become the focus, rather than where the skills were attained, from whom, when and even how. Focusing on competencies greatly expands the talent pool for employers, but also greatly enhances the opportunities available to competent talent looking for new challenges.

Competency-Based HR Management

Competency-based HR planning serves as a link between human resources management and the overall strategic plan of an organization. Competencies are the observable skills and knowledge required for a job.

Competency-based HR management supports the integration of human resources planning with business planning by allowing organizations to assess their current HR capacity against the capacity needed to achieve the vision, mission, and business goals of the organization. Targeted human resource strategies, plans and programs to address gaps (e.g., hiring and staffing, learning, career development, succession management) are then designed, developed, and implemented.

There are numerous benefits of implementing an HR strategy centered on competencies:

Organization	Employees
Contributes to employee retention	Provides clear job requirements
Develops employees for a succession plan	Identifies skills needing development to move up in the organization
Identifies relevant training for job levels; supports training needs analysis	Identifies whether a performance issue can be attributed to an employee or to other organizational factors
Provides measures for performance required to meet organization’s goals	Brings fairness and objectivity into the performance assessment process
Ensures effective employee selection; ‘hire for attitude, train for skill’	Employees will know what the job truly entails during the hiring process

While competencies are not new to most organizations, what is new is their increased application across various human resource functions (i.e., recruitment/selection, learning and development, performance management, career development and succession planning, human resource planning). Organizations are looking for new ways to acquire, manage and retain the talent needed to achieve their business goals.

Properly designed competencies translate the strategic vision and goals for the organization into behaviours or actions employees must display for the organization to be successful. Competency-based HR management approaches standardize and integrate all HR activities based on competencies that support organizational goals.

Competency-Based Job Descriptions

Historically, many job descriptions assign credentials to occupations as opposed to job-related tasks and competencies. Competency-based job descriptions are part of a human resource (HR) management system where competencies inform key practices including: recruitment, assessment, and selection; employee performance management; training and development; career and workforce planning, compensation; and organizational change. Effective competency-based job descriptions are essential to improved HR practice which will allow employers to hire candidates based on the needs of the positions benchmarked against the individual's demonstrated skills and aptitudes.

Although there are several tools available for employers, using competency-based job descriptions can add value to the existing workforce development resources and offer additional solutions for trained professionals. Competency-based job descriptions serve many purposes for both employers and employees including:

- **Identifying roles and responsibilities of the job/role based on established competencies**
- **Serving as a resource in recruiting efforts, candidate screening and interviewing**
- **Outlining specific duties, tasks and responsibilities that an employee should be able to perform in the position/job/function based on specific competencies**

Differences Between Traditional Job Descriptions and Competency-Based Job Descriptions

Typically, when employers develop a job description, they ask themselves “What tasks, duties and responsibilities are required to perform the job well?” To be more effective, they should be asking “What competencies are required to succeed on the job?” For example, ‘leadership’ is a competency that may require knowledge of various management techniques, including effective verbal communication skills, the ability to empower others, and the ability to motivate change.

Traditional Job Descriptions	Competency-Based Job Descriptions
Focus on tasks and duties, knowledge, skills, abilities, education and required certifications	Focus on tasks and duties, knowledge, skills, abilities, education and required certifications, and on-the-job behaviours

Traditional Job Descriptions	Competency-Based Job Descriptions
Account for observable skills	Account for observable skills and on-the-job behaviours
Define responsibilities	Describe responsibilities and how they are tied to competencies
Focus on individual performance	Link individual performance to organizational performance
Work is not described consistently	Work is described consistently using a common vocabulary
Employees are not able to align their skills and competencies with their job, identify performance expectations, nor see how they contribute to strategic goals	Employees can align their skills and competencies with their job, identify performance expectations and see how they contribute to strategic goals

Competency-Based Recruitment and Selection

Prior to starting a competency-based recruitment process, HR managers and employers should identify the key roles and positions required and confirm the accuracy of the job descriptions and specifications for the roles. Hiring managers need to consider what requirements they are looking for in the position and apply the competencies that will provide them with the desired hiring outcome. Job analysis can be used to assist with attaining the desired hiring outcome by applying the following requirements:

- Identify work activities, tasks, competencies, and behavioural indicators that can be observed and measured.
- Confirm the competencies are valid in their purpose statements and for the role required.
- Review major competencies with hiring managers and validate the job requirements.
- Assess existing employee competencies and review high-performance indicators in the organization to identify successful hires and why they are successful.

Competency-Based Selection

Competency-based selection is a process of evaluating candidates' skills, knowledge, and attributes by using situational, behavioural, and knowledge-based interviewing techniques to determine if the candidate demonstrates the ability to perform the job. In the selection process, different interview methods may be applied. Situational and behavioural-based interview questions require the candidate to provide examples on a specific situation or task they have previously performed. The STAR method (specific, task, action, result) describes the specific work situations, how the task was accomplished, and qualitative or quantitative measurable results. Knowledge-based questions validate the candidate possesses the required knowledge identified in the job description.

Competency-Based Interviewing

Competencies define what employees need to know and the skills needed to perform the job. The competencies in the Electricity Competency Framework and NOS can be selected and used to develop various interview questions that align with the position and job description. The interview questions should be developed by reviewing the core responsibilities identified in the job description and should be formulated by reviewing the work activities, tasks, competencies, behavioural indicators, knowledge, and education required for the role.

The Sample Competency-based Interview Questions below illustrate questions that are formulated to include the following components: what the situation was, actions that were taken, and what was the outcome.

Sample Competency-Based Interview Questions

Competency Assessed: Follow Safe Work Practices

Key Behaviours Required: Identify hazards on site, e.g., personal safety, work site, environment. Minimize or remove hazards, as necessary.

Example Interview Questions: Describe a situation that best describes your ability to follow safe practices. Specifically, describe a situation where you encountered hazardous conditions at work, and what actions did you take?

What was the situation?

What hazards did you identify?

What safety issue did it pose?

Who else was involved?

What actions did you take? What exactly did you do?

How did you determine the actions you should take?

Why did you feel that this was the safest practice?

What was the outcome? How did your actions minimize or remove the hazards presented?

Tips for Hiring Talent from Other Industries and Sectors



Think about where the talent is networking/seeking opportunities. Focus on more than just the typical 'electricity' avenues (consider all job posting platforms).

Keep an open mind beyond the past job titles/positions on a resume. At first glance, two occupations may seem completely unrelated, but it is not until you analyze actual competencies that transferability exists.

Establish which competencies are critically important and hard to train (often these are the professional skills) and which skills (often industry specific skills) can be developed/taught.

Recognize what the threshold should be for 'foot in the door' qualifications and what you are willing to invest in training for the role once hired. Often, the upskilling is less of a burden than assumed.

About EHRC (Electricity Human Resources Canada)

EHRC has completed a series of successful collaboration projects, including provincial labour market research, succession planning to build sector resilience, toolkit learning resources to increase inclusiveness and diversity, and best practices sharing for best results.

EHRC is Canada's most trusted source of objective human resources information and tools to help the Canadian electricity industry match workforce supply and demand. Canada's electricity industry is comprised of the organizations that lead the generation, transmission, and distribution of electricity. EHRC is a not-for-profit organization helping to keep the lights on in Canada by enabling a world-class workforce for the entire electricity industry.