



Competency Modeling Overview and Health Care Case Study

A Resource for Economic Development

A South Florida Case Study

Organizations that are aware of the value of skill standards find that competency modeling provides a highly efficient, employer-driven process that supports curriculum design, skill validation and competency management, all in a web-based environment that:

1. Establishes a replicable model for skills validation
2. Is built upon employer-defined skill standards that create a lifelong career path of professional development
3. Provides validated on-line resumes for potential employees and incumbents
4. Documents the competency attainment of individuals, facilitates communication regarding training needs between employers, area educators and future workers

Statement of Need – The Opportunity

There is and will continue to be a significant shortage in South Florida of workers for health-related positions. South Florida has identified this area as one of its high volume/high growth priorities to be addressed within the near future.

Demand for healthcare professionals will grow geometrically over the next few years. Growing shortages are a function of both an increase in the number of positions needed to meet the healthcare demands and an increasing number of individuals nearing retirement who currently hold these positions.

In other words, in the near future there will be a large need for individuals to replace prospective retirees and there is a growing number of aging individuals that produce an increased demand for Allied (and other) Health professionals. Adding to this problem is the fact that today women, who historically comprised the majority of this workforce, now have more opportunities for careers in other sectors (i.e., technology, manufacturing, etc.). Finally, there is still only a small minority of men that consider healthcare as a career, further contributing to the recruitment challenges.

Nation wide, large and small communities are experiencing similar problems and they are seeking solutions to these problems. South Florida can strengthen its leadership position nationally by establishing systemic responses to these problems.

System Overview

Any solution to challenges as deep and as extensive as those facing healthcare must begin with the acceptance of skills standards for the positions within the healthcare sector. The proposed solution, grounded on best practices throughout the United States, is based upon the development of a competency-based, formalized Skills Validation and Documentation System that will facilitate community partnerships between healthcare organizations and local education/workforce development organizations. This System has three primary goals:

1. Creation of competency standards that apply to all South Florida healthcare organizations.
2. Implementation of a Skills Validation System delivered via the Internet
3. A proven return on investment. Increased numbers of individuals filling positions at all levels, increased wages for traditionally low wage earners, etc.

By accomplishing the above goals various outcomes should be realized.

1. A System that assists with the recruitment of future workers starting at the High School level (or before). By identifying the skills required of healthcare careers, individuals can more efficiently develop their skills to meet outcome goals. Educational institutions can modify curriculum to ensure that the skills required for future healthcare positions are being taught; the System also records individuals' mastery of specific skills
2. The System will facilitate the upward movement of future workers and incumbents within the profession by clearly defining which additional competencies will lead to higher level, better paying jobs. In other words a career lattice is created that assists with the attainment of entry level positions, as well as providing a visible pathway for future, better paying jobs within the healthcare industry
3. A System that promotes retention of existing workers who previously had not been able to see a career path or a means for obtaining the skills to get future jobs
4. An efficient System to update position requirements and to define new jobs
5. Easy customization (through an open architecture) so that organization-specific requirements are accommodated
6. A replicable model to enable economic and workforce development organizations to address other sectors, jobs and changing conditions

Competency Model and Standards Development

Competency models show the core knowledge, skills, and personal attributes required for effective job performance. For this project, the model developed will be one that crosses job types and organizational boundaries for multiple companies in the South Florida healthcare community. The model will focus on three primary job families: Allied Health positions, pre-LPN positions, and LPN positions. Since there is no single position/job title within each of the job families being described by this competency model, a generic descriptor for each job family will be used to refer to all related positions within the classification.

Components of a Competency Model

Each competency model includes four sections:

1. Summary of Major Work Activities: a description of the key tasks performed on the job (what is done). This is a high level summary, and fairly generic, rather than a detailed list of specific task elements and the sequence in which they are performed
2. Competencies and Behavioral Indicators: a description of the skills and capabilities required for good performance (how the job is performed). Each competency is defined in terms of specific "behavioral indicators" – the observable/measurable behaviors employees use, or actions they take, in performing their jobs
3. Key Knowledge Areas: a summary of what employees must know to accomplish their tasks well. This section outlines the major areas of job knowledge, rather than detailing specific facts, procedures, etc.
4. Job Context Factors: a description of the work environment and the context in which the tasks are performed. Job context is important for understanding the personal attributes and preferences of people who will best "fit in" to the work environment, and who will most likely be satisfied working in the job (project orientation, team member, working with little supervision, special clothing needs, etc.)

Approach to Developing a Competency Model

Development of this competency model can be accomplished in different ways. In all cases there will be an iterative process of job expert interviews, notes integration, draft model development, job expert review of the draft model, and revision. This competency model is considered to be a "live" document, expected to continue undergoing further development when implemented on the Web using input from participating companies. The general process for model development proceeds as follows:

- Through meetings with a steering committee, companies will be identified that are interested in participating in the competency model development process.
- A structured interview guide and technical skills checklist will be developed in order to facilitate obtaining information from subject matter expert interviews. The interview guide will be developed based on prior experience with competency model development, and through available information describing health care competencies. The Technical Skills Checklist will be initially developed based on a review of available literature and suggestions from members of the health care community.
- Companies will be contacted and interviews conducted to ensure buy-in and currency. One-on-one interviews and/or group interviews can be conducted with upper level managers and with groups of high performing incumbents and/or supervisors.
- Based on the information gathered during the interviews, an initial draft of the competency model will be developed.
- Next, a ratings form could be developed to obtain feedback from participating companies regarding the accuracy, completeness, and "generalizability" of the resulting competency model.
- The resulting draft of the competency model and the competency model feedback form will be shared with participating organizations and feedback will be analyzed and, to the extent necessary, integrated into the final version of the model.

Competency Management and Skills Validation System

Organizations are more interested in being able to define the skill and ability levels of their employees than ever before. Organizations are concerned with issues surrounding talent management and succession planning at all levels of the organization. One way to manage these functions is to implement a system that facilitates the evaluation and documentation of the actual skills and abilities of the workforce.

Individuals (employees and potential employees) are also concerned with being able to create a career within an organization or an industry sector. Often times the individual employee or student does not understand what skills are required to obtain a desired job. And more importantly, most individuals have no way of identifying the skills gap between their current skills and the skills needed for a given job.

US DOL-recognized Web-based technology facilitates the creation of a workforce development system that integrates education, certification and skill validation through an innovative coaching system, resulting in a more effective workforce. The system helps identify the foundational knowledge objectives, vendor-neutral certifications and a unique on-the-job learning component built around industry standard competencies that in turn will:

- Help **Students** and **Individuals** get started on a career in healthcare.
- Help **Healthcare workers** develop and validate critical competencies for their current and future jobs.
- Help **Companies** develop and validate worker abilities to make them more productive.
- Help **Training Providers** bring their benefit beyond the classroom and into the workplace.

Education and public institution/workforce development programs are continually trying to find a way to meet the demands of a community's business. Programs are being refined to ensure that the skills and abilities being measured and taught fit very closely to the needs of local businesses. A competency management and skills validation system allows for the documentation and measurement of whether or not these goals are being met.

Return on Investment

For a program to be successful there must be a strategy that leads to self-sufficiency and sustainability. For a program such as the one described Industry will eventually provide the on-going sustainability (funding) by being able to prove that there is a significant return on investment for the money and time invested. The return (and proof) for organizations will come from numerous sources, including:

- Increased retention
- Increased applicant pools (of currently qualified candidates) which will allow positions to be filled quicker
- Increased numbers of individuals enrolling in Allied Health education programs and subsequently entering the healthcare sector
- Increased bench strength for all positions within the sector
- Increased productivity of incumbent workers

For the clients/employee the return is provided through:

- Increased retention
- Higher wages
- The ability to achieve a career within an organization and industry sector

In order for the return on investment to be quantified, outcome measures must be established. In some cases additional effort will need to be made in order to obtain critical data. In other cases the data already exists. Baseline data needs to be collected before a program is ever implemented and a control group should be set up to further support the conclusions.

Examples of data that will support the value of this program include: Average wage, average length of stay in first jobs, number of individuals advancing their career within the organization, average time to be hired by an organization, retention/turnover rates, training pass rates within the organization, time to full productivity, and many more. The actual measures to be collected will need to be well defined and a process created that facilitates the actual collection of the data.

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