How to Build Competency-Based
Job Descriptions Correctly

The world of work has sure changed a lot over the past few decades, but for many companies, job descriptions have remained pretty much the same.

At the same time, there's an **increasing recognition** that they're an important talent record and, done correctly, have the potential to serve as a central part of any talent management and HR programs.

That's why many organizations these days are making use of competency based job descriptions. Competency based job descriptions add a layer of consistency and standardization to your traditional job description.

Most importantly, the competencies allow the job description to plug into almost every facet of your employees' lifecycle — from the hiring process, to assessment programs, development plans, and beyond. So that old single-use document that gets stashed in a filing cabinet actually becomes a dynamic, key part of your HR programs and talent management strategy.

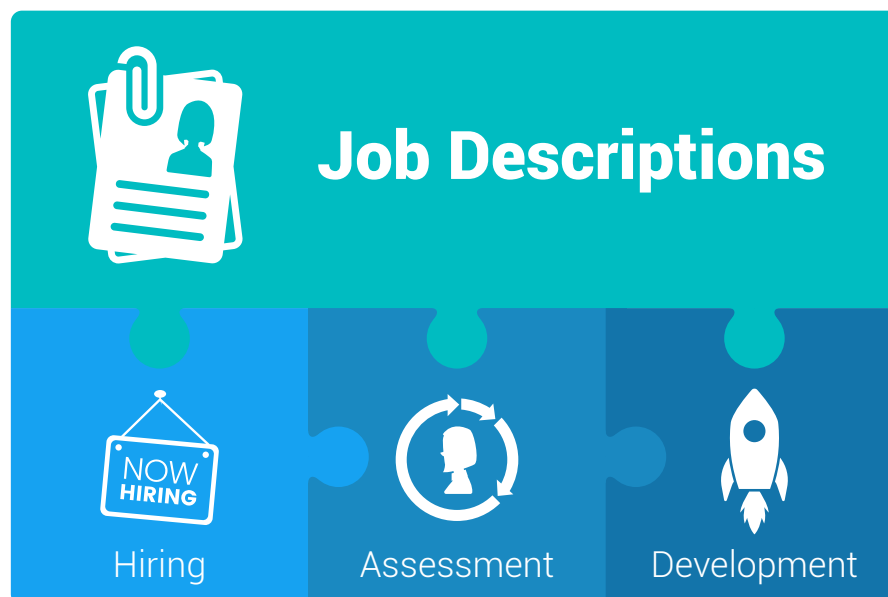But before we get there, let's start with the basics.

Job Descriptions

Hiring   Assessment   Development

Table of Contents

What Are Competencies in a Job Description?

Competencies in a job description identify the desired, required skills and behaviors needed to perform a job successfully.

Competencies can identify required soft skills — for example, *"attention to detail"* or *"fostering communication"*. At HRSG, we call these behavioral competencies. But they often go beyond soft skills into technical skills needed for success in specialized roles, like sales, marketing or IT, for example. These more specific skills are generally referred to as technical competencies.

Why Do People Use Competencies in Job Descriptions?

As mentioned, one reason that people use competencies on their job descriptions is that it unifies all descriptions and positions across the organization under a common framework. This provides structure to the organization's HR programs, and allows HR personnel to get a much better grasp on the roles, levels, and dependencies between jobs in their organization.

Beyond that, adding competencies to your job descriptions opens up a new world of talent management possibilities.

With competencies on your descriptions, you can hire based on those competencies with specific **behavioral interview questions**; assess employees based on those competencies; build development plans; and use them to feed into **career pathing tools** that give employees a visual roadmap for advancement in your organization, heavily based on the competencies associated with each and every role in your company.

Job: Accountant

Summary

♦ Competencies

📄 Responsibilities

📚 Knowledge Areas

🎓 Education

♦ Competencies

Accounting and Reporting	Level 3
Reconciliation and Analysis	Level 2
Attention to Detail	Level 3
Fostering Communication	Level 3
Auditing	Level 2

List of Competencies for Job Descriptions

Here are the competencies currently offered by HRSG. Click to view them:

Behavioral Competencies (examples: **Achievement Orientation**, Client Focus, Problem Solving)

Technical Competencies

- Corporate Technical Competencies
  - **Accounting & Finance Competencies**
  - **Business Operations Competencies**
  - **HR Competencies**
  - **IT Competencies**
  - **Marketing Competencies**
  - **Sales Competencies**
- Industry Technical Competencies
  - **Accounting & Finance Industry Competencies**
  - **Agile Development Competencies**
  - **Central Banking Competencies**
  - **Cyber Security Competencies**
  - **Data Analytics Competencies**
  - **Digital Marketing Competencies**
  - **Legal Competencies**
  - **Network Competencies**
  - **Policing Competencies**
  - **Supply Chain Management Competencies**

Competency Based Job Description Examples (Samples & Templates)

Looking for some sample competency-based job descriptions? You've come to the right place. Check out this example of a Project Manager competency-based job description.

Job Description: Project Manager

Job Summary

The Project Manager executes projects according to the project plan by working with stakeholders to understand requirements, developing project management plans, and maintaining project documentation.

Job level: Manager

Responsibilities

Product & Project Management

- Execute the project according to the project plan
- Develop project proposals, project charters, and project management plans
- Work with project stakeholders to understand project requirements, and ensure that deliverables satisfy these requirements
- Clarify and communicate the project scope and ongoing progress to project team members
- Engage project stakeholders and communicate project updates to ensure buy-in and project success
- Monitor and track project execution against project plan and budget
- Control and manage project execution to mitigate project risks
- Ensure that all project estimates are prepared in accordance with the requirements of the project
- Develop post-project support to ensure measurement of project objectives
- Ensure that project decisions are formally documented and that project deliverables are stored in the official project repository

Competencies

Project Management (Level 4)
Planning, implementing, monitoring and completing projects, ensuring effective management of scope, resources, time, cost, quality, risk and communications.

Attention to Detail (Level 3)
Working in a conscientious, consistent and thorough manner.

Competencies — Continued

Collaborating with Others (Level 3)
Working together with others in a cooperative and supportive manner to achieve shared goals.

Managing Project Communications (Level 3)
Managing, controlling and monitoring the nature of project information and communication directives to ensure that information needs are met.

Project Risk Management (Level 3)
Identifying, assessing, prioritizing, documenting and managing risk and its impact.

Knowledge Areas

- Agile Methodology (Intermediate)
- Change Management (Intermediate)
- Lean Project Management Principles (Intermediate)
- Microsoft Office Suite (Intermediate)
- Microsoft Project (Intermediate)
- Microsoft SharePoint (Intermediate)
- Microsoft Visio (Intermediate)
- Project Management Software (Intermediate)
- SAP (Intermediate)
- Systems Development Life Cycle (SDLC) (Intermediate)

Education

- Business and Commerce (College diploma) **or**
- Business Administration (College diploma)

Certification

- Lean Six Sigma-Black Belt
- Project Management Professional (PMP)

Looking for more?

Check out some of our **other examples**. We've put together hiring guides for 8 key positions that contain real-world competency-based job descriptions, as well as interview questions based on those specific competencies that are embedded within the job description. We have hiring guides for:

Project Manager
Category: Project & Product Management

Business Development Representative (BDR)
Category: Sales

Marketing Manager
Category: Marketing

Administrator
Category: Administration

Graphic Designer
Category: Marketing

Business Data Analyst
Category: Business Intelligence

Account Executive
Category: Sales

Finance Manager
Category: Accounting & Finance

Looking for useful tips and ideas to help you build better job descriptions faster? **Check out our Job Description Toolkit.**

How to Build Competency Based Job Descriptions

There are two main ways to build competency based job descriptions. Let's start with the traditional way, and then we'll look at how companies are utilizing technology to speed up the process substantially.

The Traditional Way:

The traditional way of incorporating competencies and job descriptions involves a lot of back-and-forth between your HR team and other stakeholders (i.e. other people in the company). It starts with a competency library, which is usually purchased from a competency provider (like HRSG) or developed internally (which can be quite a time and resource-intensive process.)

With the competencies ready, it's now time to decide which ones belong with which jobs. These may consist of core competencies that apply across the whole organization; departmental competencies, and specific technical competencies that apply to each role.

Usually you'll end up with 3 to 10 competencies on a job description and these will consist of a mix of those technical (skill-based) competencies, and softer behavioral skills. Every competency consists of five levels to illustrate the proficiency needed when they're applied to a specific job.

To illustrate this, let's look at the example of a project manager vs. project assistant. They'll share many of the same general, behavioral competencies; but if we look at the levels required for success, and the more job-specific competencies, we see the differences between the two roles emerge.

Identifying these competencies, and the appropriate levels for individual roles, can be a pretty time-consuming process. Often, you'll need many people involved in the process from start-to-finish: this may include any or all of subject matter experts, managers, c-level executives who want a say in the process, the employee themselves, and potentially others.

In other words, while the benefits of competency-based job descriptions are substantial, the traditional process of putting them together can be fairly painful.

	PROJECT MANAGER	Level	PROJECT ASSISTANT	Level
SPECIFIC	Project Risk Management	03	Quality Focus	02
	Resource Management	03	Teamwork	02
JOB FAMILY	Analytical Thinking	03	Analytical Thinking	01
	Communications Management	03	Communications Management	02
	Project Planning	03	Project Planning	01
CORE	Achievement Orientation	03	Achievement Orientation	01
	Adaptabilty	04	Adaptabilty	02
	Client Focus	04	Client Focus	02

The Modern Way:

So let's look at the modern way that companies are mapping competencies to their job descriptions. The modern method essentially uses all the same tactics, but streamlines the process incredibly through the use of purpose-built software technology.

Click the image below to check out the Smart Job Descriptions video to get a sense of how, using HRSG's software, you can create competency-based "Smart Job Descriptions" in minutes for your organization.

Technology has enabled a much more accessible process, so that a wider array of organizations can take advantage of the benefits of competency based job descriptions. Here's a table to sum up the main differences in the process of mapping competencies:

The old way to build competency based job descriptions:	The modern way to build competency based job descriptions, using software:
Build competencies from scratch, consulting engagement to develop custom ones, or buy pre-built paper dictionaries.	Purchase banks of competencies, get them delivered within cloud software.
Engage in exhaustive manual consultation with multiple stakeholders to define core, departmental and job-specific competencies.	Dispatch a competency profiling survey to identify competencies.
Meticulously map competencies to all jobs in your organization.	Map competencies using AI to find the most relevant suggested competencies for a role.

How Can Competency Based Job Descriptions Be Used Throughout the Employee Lifecycle?

So, once you've got competency based job descriptions in place, how do you use them to elevate your process and empower your employees?

Let's explore this idea, **captured in this post** at TalentCulture.com:

Hiring & Selection: This comes down to being able to carry out structured, behavioral interviews, with questions based directly on the required skills and behaviors. That way, interviews are carried out in a structured, consistent manner… and your company's hiring decisions are made based on consistent criteria.

Assessment & Development: Again, the competencies on the "smart" job descriptions allow the actual job description to play a central role in your assessment programs. This may take the form of self-assessment, supervisor assessment, or the ever-popular 360 assessment, often used in leadership roles. If gaps are identified, the organization can provide employees with learning resources pre-mapped to competencies to develop and strengthen those gaps.

Engagement & Retention: One of the most powerful motivators to keep top employees engaged is opportunities for growth. With your competencies mapped to every job, there's total transparency on exactly what skills and behaviors, at what levels, your people need to demonstrate in order to take their next step (or even reach their dream job).

Hands down, the easiest way to build competency based job descriptions at scale is by using purpose-built **job description software**.

HRSG's CompetencyCore platform allows you to map competencies to your jobs with the click of a mouse, using advanced AI technology.

Get your demo today to see it in action for yourself.

About HRSG

For three decades, HRSG has delivered products and services to define talent needs, address skill deficiencies and improve individual and organizational performance.

Our Products division has distilled that 30 years of expertise into a competency, job description and career management software solution. Leveraging the power of AI, CompetencyCore™ is unlike any other product on the market, bringing together the power of competencies and the utility of job descriptions.

Our Talent Management Solutions division delivers best practice professional services in competency-based management, testing and assessment. In addition, we train HR professionals worldwide in our competency-based management methodologies.

To learn more about how HRSG's software makes HR professionals proactive and in-control, visit us at

www.hrsg.ca or call 1-866-574-7041 x600.

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