Original Research

WALDEN UNIVERSITY

Development and Validation of a Global Competency Framework for Preparing New Graduates for Early Career Professional Roles

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Abstract

Objectives: The current objectives include the development of a global competency model applicable across a wide range of jobs, industries, and geographies for university graduates entering the workplace.

Method: The competency model was developed utilizing a global panel of subject matter experts and a validation survey of over 25,000 students, faculty, staff, and employers across more than 30 countries.

Results: The results showed substantial consistency for the importance and criticality ratings of the competencies, with Achieving Objectives, Analyzing and Solving Problems, Adapting to Change, Communicating Orally, Learning and Self-Development, Making Decisions, Planning and Organizing, and Working Well with Others as the highest-rated competencies across regions, roles, and industries.

Conclusions: The most important competencies for students entering the workforce were consistent across different jobs, different industries, and different countries. The diversity and varied experience levels of the sample provide greater generalizability than most competency modeling projects that are often idiosyncratic to specific roles, industries, subjects, or levels.

Implication for Theory and/or Practice: University faculty and staff can use the results of the validation study to develop curricula and programs that will be better able to foster important competencies to ensure that their students are better prepared to enter the workplace. Although some organizations emphasize leadership as important for all professional employees, Managing the Work of Others, Leading Others, and Influencing Others were consistently rated lower in importance by employers across all roles and regions and may not be appropriate as the primary focus of skill development for new graduates.

Introduction

Academic programs have received a rapidly increasing call to incorporate skills that have been referred to as soft skills and, most recently, 21st-century skills. Merisotis and Hauser (2020) noted that significant changes to higher education as a result of COVID-19 provide an opportunity to refocus the way we think about the goals of higher education: "While we're spending billions to save higher education, college and university leaders should focus on engaging today's students. They will have to *focus more clearly on building people's skills for work and civic life* [italics by the current authors], including coming up with better approaches for them to demonstrate what they know and can do" (p. 1). This is not only a United States phenomenon. Mobility across borders requires that students be prepared for jobs in the global market, and competency mapping is becoming increasingly popular with employers when seeking candidates (Bhagra & Sharma, 2018). In an examination of employer expectations, Karzunina et al. (2018) found that, for all but one of the 15 employability skills identified, employers reported a distinct difference between the importance of the skill and new hire preparation in that skill and that this difference was noted generally across regions and countries.

Many universities are finding ways to incorporate essential employability skills into their curriculum (Schaffhauser, 2020), particularly as competency-based programs are becoming more popular. Integration is not necessarily straightforward, as there needs to be clear identification of which skills are important, the specific competencies required, and the integration into curricular development efforts and effective assessment (Care et al., 2018). In addition, agencies are emerging, among them the Quality Assurance Commons (https://theqacommons.org/), that certify programs which adequately prepare students for the workplace. The messages from higher education and the workplace are clear: We need to do a better job of preparing graduates for a dynamic workplace.

Our goal was to develop a comprehensive, global competency-model framework for a large network of international institutions of higher education grounded in the current needs of global employers. The model needed to be relevant across cultural contexts, disciplines, and languages. Such a competency framework would allow each of the institutions to incorporate specific competencies into the curriculum and then to assess and improve the work readiness of its students before they graduate and enter the professional workforce. Additionally, results of assessment data based on the framework could be used to modify the curriculum to ensure that student learning outcomes match the needs of employers.

Literature Review of Competency Modeling

Competency modeling has been most clearly defined by Campion et al. (2011) as "collections of knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics (KSAOs) that are needed for effective performance in the jobs in question" (p. 226). The purpose of competency models can be wide ranging, but most organizations use them to serve as the foundation for talent management activities that can impact all levels of an organization (Sanchez & Levine, 2009). An estimated 70% to 80% of Fortune 500 companies use some type of competency model (Stone et al., 2013). Competency models can help inform a wide variety of organizational practices and initiatives, such as employee selection, career development, leadership development, and organizational change (Stevens, 2012).

Although competency modeling is commonly used in the world of work, it is also becoming more prevalent in areas outside of the traditional work environment (Stevens, 2012), such as in educational settings. For example, competency models are beginning to be used in academic training programs. Paulson (2001) argued that postsecondary institutions should be training students in the skills and abilities that enhance competencies related to liberal arts education and necessary for workplace success. Competency models have served as the foundation for competency-based education that ensures graduates have the necessary knowledge and skills to practice in their professions in many disciplines, including the health sciences (Mirzazadeh et al., 2013) and STEM fields (Jang, 2016). Given the growing emphasis on preparing college graduates for the professional workforce, it is critical to understand the competencies that employers seek in new graduates so they can be embedded into academic curricula and other development programs for students. Thus, understanding the competencies deemed important and critical by global employers is crucial for developing a comprehensive academic curriculum that prepares students for the world of work.

Several researchers have attempted to develop a core set of competencies that would apply in any organization (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990; Bartram, 2005). Core competencies are designed as components of an organization's strategy as opposed to a set of individual attributes (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990). This idea was advanced by Lawler (1994), who wrote that identification of job-related knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics (KSAO) should not be driven by job analysis at a single job level, but on a set of competencies derived via an organizational analysis.

Competency Modeling Frameworks in Higher Education

By understanding the ways that employers use competency model frameworks, higher education institutions can use this information to develop frameworks that map to the curriculum and help enhance students' skill development (Lucia & Lepsinger, 1999; Schippmann et al., 2000; Zemke, 1982). Paulson (2001) wrote, "it seems obvious that educators can no longer rely on mere convening of classes and granting of diplomas as sufficient proof that their graduates meet workplace needs" (p. 42). She goes on to write, "employers increasingly view diplomas and degrees with skepticism and want different measures to use when recruiting and retraining employees. Competencies can offer a suitable alternative" (p. 42).

Higher education has shown tremendous growth in the development of competency model frameworks. These frameworks match curricular requirements to employer or discipline needs. For example, Mirzazadeh et al. (2014) used a participatory approach with faculty and students to develop a competency framework comprising eight domains of academic and practice skills required for work in the health professions (clinical skills; communication skills; patient management; health promotion and disease prevention; personal development; professionalism; medical ethics; and law) (p. 710). Other published competency models generated to assess preparation for the workplace include University of Kansas Master of Public Administration students (Getha-Taylor et al., 2013); Master's in Human Resource Development for students in Korea (Lee 2009); and New Zealand graduate business school students (Hodges & Burchell, 2003). Lunev

et al. (2013) have also created a competency model to be used across a variety of disciplines; however, their work focused specifically on Russian industry.

Thus, studies demonstrate that competency model frameworks are a useful means to ensure students are prepared for the workplace. Most frameworks have been designed to apply to specific disciplinary, institutional, and programmatic contexts. However, few studies have provided examples of competency model frameworks that are developed at the outset to be global in nature, meaning that they apply across a broad cross-section of industries, cultural contexts, and languages. In a workforce that is becoming increasingly global, training students to be successful globally potentially provides them with a competitive advantage when seeking work.

Competency Model Best Practices

We followed the recommendations from a Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (SIOP) taskforce, which identified several essential elements for competency model development (Campion, et al., 2011). First, the competency model was linked to cross-industry organizational goals and objectives by gathering input from over 5,000 professionals working in organizations around the world during the development and validation of the competency model; thus, the competency model is connected with the needs of employers and addresses a key focus area involving academic–employer relationships. Second, the development of the competency model framework was driven by senior management and established as a priority for Laureate Education, Inc., a global network of institutions of higher education. To ensure buy-in, we assembled a global panel of stakeholders from across the organization to act as reviewers of all work processes and outputs. Third, we conducted dozens of focus groups using job analysis techniques with employers, faculty/staff, and students from around the world that included discussions of the work performed by new graduates and the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics needed to perform the work. Fourth, each competency was developed with a clear behavioral definition as well as detailed descriptions of what performance looks like at different levels of proficiency. The result of these best practices is a library of 20 competencies that apply to a variety of degrees across fields of study and across the widest range of early-career professional jobs.

Purpose of the Study

The development of the competency modeling framework is part of an ambitious, multi-year project that began in 2015 to identify, define, and measure the foundational competencies and behavioral skills graduating students require to be successful in entry-level professional jobs across industries and geographic regions. Ultimately, students are assessed on their attainment of knowledge and skills-related workplace competencies prior to graduation. The framework was developed to serve as the basis for education initiatives that seek to improve program curricula and student development at institutions across the Laureate International network. The specific objectives of this project were to (1) develop a behavioral competency framework/library, involving the input of multiple stakeholders including global employers, that would serve as the basis for other competency-based education initiatives; (2) define the competencies required by graduating students to be successful in the global workplace, enhance their employability, and lead to sustained professional success; and (3) ensure applicability of the model across all campuses, geographic regions, and fields of study.

Methods

Context

This competency model was developed by Laureate Education, Inc., a global network of institutions of higher education; at the time of development, Laureate was operating in 25 countries that included over one million students worldwide. As part of their mission, Laureate's network institutions deliver professional-oriented programs across a broad range of disciplines. These disciplines encompass the health sciences; social sciences and education; engineering; business; hospitality and culinary; and art and design, among others. It also had at the time over 50,000 faculty members; many of those faculty also work in their professions and bring a unique perspective to the classroom. Given its size, breadth of programs, and institutions across the globe, Laureate Education was extremely well positioned to undertake the development of a global competency model framework based on input from employers, faculty, staff, students, and alumni that would address the needs of its global student body and the employers with whom they will work after graduation.

Procedure

Review
Initial development of the framework began by reviewing existing competency models in the competency and education research literature, reviewing internal models that had been developed independently by several institutions in the Laureate network, and compiling existing competency research and data gathered by SHL, a talent management organization that helps companies attract, develop, and grow the workforce they need to succeed, over time across a variety of organizations. This initial review was conducted to understand the current state of research in competency models, their application in educational and employment settings, and to ensure buy-in from multiple internal Laureate stakeholders interested in workplace competency development. The primary focus of the review was identifying more general competencies that are relevant globally and across job roles (e.g., working with others, problem solving) rather than competencies that are more narrow or job specific (e.g., mechanical aptitude, programming capability).

Drafting the competencies and competency-related behaviors
Once the relevant competency research and data were compiled, competency information was combined into a competency crosswalk spreadsheet listing all of the competencies identified in the literature as well as a count of how many sources each competency was found in to help identify trends, overlap, and gaps in the various models. Industrial–organizational psychologist subject matter experts reviewed the document and distilled 21 initial competencies for which titles, definitions, and proficiency levels were drafted. Some of the themes that emerged from the literature review were the importance of adaptability, resilience, continuous learning, and problem solving. Some competencies were less prevalent (e.g., social responsibility, technology) in the literature review but were included in the initial model as they were apparently becoming more critical in the current work environment and likely will continue to grow in importance.

The team of I/O psychologists then drafted behaviors that exemplified each competency. For each behavior, the team drafted descriptions of the three levels of proficiency—foundational, intermediate, and advanced. Foundational was written to reflect the level generally expected of students when they are ready to enter the workforce as entry-level professionals. The initial drafts were thoroughly reviewed in an iterative process involving the I/O psychologists and the Laureate project team.

Global stakeholder focus groups
Draft competencies were reviewed, revised, and ultimately approved by a global advisory council of Laureate leaders. Following approval by the advisory council, the project team conducted 18 global focus groups (comprised of 100 people total) with employers of university graduates and academic leaders, faculty, staff, alumni, and students. The primary objective of the focus groups was to gather information from diverse

stakeholders by facilitating discussions about the competencies, behaviors, and proficiency-level descriptions. Most focus groups were conducted in English, as English is the language of business for the Laureate network. However, four of the focus groups were conducted in Spanish. All Laureate network regions were well represented in the focus groups.

Focus group feedback review

Following the focus groups, we organized all feedback by type of participant, region, competency, behavior, and proficiency level. Project leaders experienced in competency model development reviewed and made decisions about how to incorporate each piece of feedback. Additional project team members were brought in to reconcile disagreement or conflicting feedback as needed. After several revisions to the competency model based on the results of the focus groups, the advisory council reconvened for further review of the model. Additionally, the model was presented to 10 regional senior academic and business leaders for final approval in a series of four steering committee meetings, one for each of the four Laureate network regions. The resulting competency model contained 20 competencies that reflect the broad capabilities and behaviors required across jobs and professions, private sector and public sector roles, large and small businesses, and a wide range of industries. Appendix A contains the competencies and associated behaviors.

Competency validation survey

The purpose of the validation survey was to collect data on perceived importance of the competencies and associated behaviors. We also wanted to ensure, as part of a Laureate network buy-in campaign, that a representative group of employers and experts across Laureate institutions, geographic regions/cultures, and fields of study evaluated the model. We included students, many of whom work part or full time, as well as alumni who are already in the workplace, to ensure that we had a student view of the framework. Surveys were translated and launched in 12 languages: Arabic, Bahasa Malaysia, Brazilian Portuguese, English, French, German, Greek, Latin American Spanish, Malaysian Simplified Chinese, Spanish, Thai, and Turkish.

Participants were asked for each competency, "how important is this competency for the successful performance of new professionals entering the workplace?" They then assigned a rating based on a 5-point scale (1 = Not At All Important; 2 = Somewhat Important; 3 = Important; 4 = Very Important; 5 = Critically Important). In addition to rating the importance of each competency, participants were asked to choose the competencies that they deemed most critical. Specifically, respondents were shown all 20 competencies and asked to select at least five and no more than 10 competencies that they believed to be the most critical for new professionals.

Sample

The sampling plan called for participation from 17,577 participants across all roles of interest, including current students, faculty, staff/administrators, alumni, and employers. A total of 30,146 individuals entered the survey, some of whom dropped out before answering any questions. The final sample in the analysis dataset included 25,202 participants, exceeding the original sampling plan by 7,625 individuals (43%). More than 5,000 professionals and employers from around the world that were not currently affiliated with the university chose to participate. The professionals and employers were solicited through the university's alumni and other professional networks. Individuals from different levels within employing organizations participated in the survey, including approximately equal percentages of respondents falling into individual contributor, first-line supervisors, mid-level managers, senior managers, and other categories. These individuals provide first-hand perspective on the capabilities expected of new professionals entering the workplace. The survey data were examined to ensure that only high-quality data were retained for analysis. Participants were excluded based on two criteria, 1) if they completed the survey in less than two and a half minutes, or 2) if they had a standard deviation of zero in all responses.

Results

Analysis of the survey data focused on: (a) evaluating the importance of each competency across geographic regions, (b) evaluating the importance of each competency by industry, and (c) evaluating the importance ratings of each competency by role (i.e., students, faculty, administrators, alumni, and employers). Given the importance of information from participants within potential employing organizations (e.g., supervisors, hiring managers, HR professionals) regarding the expectations of entry-level professionals, many of the subsequent analyses focus on this "employer" data. The results, however, are generally consistent across students, faculty/staff, administrators, and alumni roles.

Appendix A provides definitions for each of the 20 competencies validated in the study. Table 1 shows the overall M, SD, inter-rater agreement (rw_g) and rank of the Importance rating for each competency across all respondents and for the Employer role. Rank is the numerical order of the importance means, with 1 = most important and 20 = least important. When two competencies had the same mean to the hundredth decimal place value (.01), the same rank was given so as not to exaggerate minor differences in means. Inter-rater agreement was calculated using the rw_g statistic (Burke & Dunlap, 2002). This index varies between 0 and 1 and is used to assess agreement when multiple raters rate a single item. It compares the observed standard deviation in ratings to the expected standard deviation if the ratings were random (James et al., 1984). That is, the rw_g describes the extent to which individuals agree on the rating of an item compared to the agreement that would be expected by chance. A rw_g of 1 indicates perfect agreement and rw_g of 0 indicates complete lack of agreement. At the overall level, the rw_g ranged from .55 to .69, indicating moderate to high levels of agreement. All competencies received a mean importance rating of at least 3.0 (with the lowest rating being 3.8), indicating that they are all validated as being important for entry-level professionals.

Consistency Across Roles, Regions, and Industries

There was remarkable consistency in the importance ratings of the competencies across regions, industries, and roles. The following competencies were rated as very important (mean rating greater than 4.0) across all regions, industries, and roles: (a) Achieving Objectives; (b) Analyzing and Solving Problems; (c) Adapting to Change; (d) Communicating Orally; (e) Learning and Self-Development; (f) Making Decisions; (g) Planning and Organizing; and (h) Working Well with Others. Competencies with a rating of at least 3.0 but less than 4.0 include: (a) Applying a Global Mindset; (b) Exhibiting Resilience; (c) Influencing Others; (d) Cultivating a Strategic and Entrepreneurial Mindset; and (e) Managing the Work of Others.

The rank ordering of competencies was very consistent across participant roles, with the highest-rated and lowest-rated competencies generally the same across groups (see Table 2). One notable exception is that faculty, staff, and administrators rated Upholding Ethical Standards and Social Responsibility in the top three competencies while students, alumni, and employers had rankings for that competency in the middle range

Table 1: *Competency Ratings by Employers and Overall*

	Employer					Overall				
Competency	N	M	SD	Rw$_g$	Rank	N	M	SD	Rw$_g$	Rank
1. Achieving Objectives	5101	4.20	.797	.68	7	25000	4.22	.799	.68	10
2. Adapting to Change	5101	4.24	.757	.71	5	24999	4.23	.783	.69	9
3. Analyzing & Solving Problems	5101	4.28	.781	.70	3	25000	4.32	.785	.69	3
4. Applying a Global Mindset	5101	3.73	.953	.55	18	25000	3.88	.924	.57	18
5. Communicating in Writing	5101	4.04	.860	.63	12	25000	4.07	.880	.61	13
6. Communicating Orally	5101	4.29	.772	.70	2	25000	4.33	.790	.69	1
7. Cultivating a Strategic & Entrepreneurial Mindset	5101	3.84	.923	.57	17	24999	3.92	.910	.59	17
8. Demonstrating Accountability	5101	4.24	.831	.65	5	25000	4.29	.826	.66	5
9. Exhibiting Resilience	5101	3.93	.856	.63	15	25000	3.98	.858	.63	16
10. Generating Ideas & Innovating	5101	4.02	.858	.63	13	25000	4.13	.851	.64	12
11. Influencing Others	5089	3.73	.923	.57	18	24910	3.84	.901	.59	19
12. Leading Others	5089	3.89	.979	.52	16	24910	3.99	.925	.57	15
13. Learning & Self-Development	5089	4.26	.790	.69	4	24910	4.3	.791	.69	4
14. Leveraging Technology	5089	3.97	.871	.62	14	24910	4.06	.863	.63	14
15. Making Decisions	5089	4.13	.863	.63	11	24910	4.24	.826	.66	7
16. Managing the Work of Others	5089	3.69	1.023	.48	20	24910	3.8	.949	.55	20
17. Meeting Customer/Stakeholder Expectations	5089	4.17	.864	.63	9	24910	4.14	.877	.62	11
18. Planning & Organizing	5089	4.17	.827	.66	9	24910	4.24	.814	.67	7
19. Upholding Ethical Standards & Demonstrating Social Responsibility	5089	4.18	.872	.62	8	24910	4.25	.856	.63	6
20. Working Well With Others	5089	4.30	.787	.69	1	24910	4.33	.791	.69	1

Note. Ninety participants only completed the first 10 ratings (Students N = 60; Faculty/Staff N = 6; Administrator N = 3; Alumni N = 9; Employer N = 12); *2 student participants answered only 19 ratings.

Table 2: *Competency Ratings by Laureate Role and Overall*

Competency Components	Overall Rank	Student Rank	Faculty/ Staff Rank	Administrator Rank	Alumni Rank	Employer Rank
Communicating Orally	1	2	3	4	1	2
Working Well With Others	1	1	3	2	3	1
Analyzing & Solving Problems	3	4	1	1	2	3
Learning & Self-Development	4	3	5	6	5	4
Demonstrating Accountability	5	5	5	9	3	5
Upholding Ethical Standards & Demonstrating Social Responsibility	6	8	1	3	10	8
Making Decisions	7	6	8	6	6	11
Planning & Organizing	7	7	8	6	6	9
Adapting to Change	9	11	5	5	8	5
Achieving Objectives	10	9	8	10	8	7
Meeting Customer/Stakeholder Expectations	11	12	14	11	11	9
Generating Ideas & Innovating	12	10	12	12	13	13
Communicating in Writing	13	15	11	13	14	12
Leveraging Technology	14	13	13	14	12	14
Leading Others	15	14	16	15	16	16
Exhibiting Resilience	16	17	15	16	15	15
Cultivating a Strategic & Entrepreneurial Mindset	17	16	18	17	17	17
Applying a Global Mindset	18	18	17	20	18	18
Influencing Others	19	19	19	19	19	18
Managing the Work of Others	20	20	19	18	20	20

Note. Sample Sizes (Overall N = 24,910 - 25,000; Student N = 10,0613 - 10,0673; Faculty/Staff N = 5,820 - 5,826; Administrator N = 1,443 - 1,446; Alumni N = 1,945 - 1,954; Employer N = 5,089 -5,101)

The competency rankings by industry are shown in Table 4, and they similarly display high levels of consistency. Working Well With Others rated in the top three most important competencies by six of the eight industry sectors, and Communicating Orally and Analyzing and Solving Problems were both rated in the top three most important competencies for five of the eight industry sectors. As it was by region, Managing the Work of Others was consistently ranked as one of the least important competencies across industries. *Applying a Global Mindset* was also ranked among the least important competencies. Some notable differences across industries were that Generating Ideas and Innovating was ranked most highly by respondents from the creative industries, and Upholding Ethical Standards was particularly highly ranked in the healthcare and government industries.

Table 3: *Competency Ratings by Region*

Competency Components	Overall Rank	Africa Rank	Americas—Canada/US Rank	Americas—Latin America Rank	Asia Rank	Europe Rank	Oceania Rank
Communicating Orally	1	5	5	2	3	2	2
Working Well With Others	1	1	2	3	2	2	1
Analyzing & Solving Problems	3	9	4	1	4	2	6
Learning & Self-Development	4	3	7	6	1	1	5
Demonstrating Accountability	5	8	3	4	9	5	7
Upholding Ethical Standards & Demonstrating Social Responsibility	6	1	1	7	7	11	3
Making Decisions	7	12	10	5	12	9	12
Planning & Organizing	7	9	12	7	6	7	7
Adapting to Change	9	5	5	10	4	6	4
Achieving Objectives	10	5	8	9	8	8	10
Meeting Customer/Stakeholder Expectations	11	4	13	12	9	10	9
Generating Ideas & Innovating	12	13	14	11	11	11	14
Communicating in Writing	13	11	8	15	14	13	13
Leveraging Technology	14	15	14	13	15	16	14
Leading Others	15	17	16	14	17	18	16
Exhibiting Resilience	16	13	10	17	13	14	11
Cultivating a Strategic & Entrepreneurial Mindset	17	16	19	16	17	15	19
Applying a Global Mindset	18	18	18	18	16	17	17
Influencing Others	19	19	17	19	19	19	17
Managing the Work of Others	20	20	20	20	20	20	20

Note. Sample Sizes (Overall N = 24,910; Africa N = 862; Americas US/Canada N = 1,520; Americas Latin America N = 17,205; Asia N = 2,135; Europe N = 2,808; Oceania N = 326)

Table 4: *Competency Ratings by Industry*

Competency Components	Overall Rank	Manufacturing Rank	Professional Services Rank	Consumer Services Rank	Creative Industries Rank	Health care Rank	Government Non-Profit Rank	Banking Finance Rank
Communicating Orally	1	6	1	2	2	4	4	1
Working Well With Others	1	4	5	1	3	2	1	1
Analyzing & Solving Problems	3	1	1	6	1	3	3	4
Learning & Self-Development	4	2	4	3	4	5	6	5
Demonstrating Accountability	5	2	3	4	8	6	5	1
Upholding Ethical Standards & Demonstrating Social Responsibility	6	11	7	10	10	1	2	9
Making Decisions	7	9	10	10	10	8	8	11
Planning & Organizing	7	8	9	7	6	10	8	10
Adapting to Change	9	6	5	4	6	7	6	6
Achieving Objectives	10	4	8	7	8	9	8	7
Meeting Customer/Stakeholder Expectations	11	9	11	9	13	12	14	7
Generating Ideas & Innovating	12	12	13	12	5	14	12	14
Communicating in Writing	13	14	12	13	12	11	11	13
Leveraging Technology	14	13	14	16	14	15	13	12
Leading Others	15	15	15	15	17	16	16	17
Exhibiting Resilience	16	16	17	14	15	13	15	16
Cultivating a Strategic & Entrepreneurial Mindset	17	17	16	17	18	20	17	15
Applying a Global Mindset	18	18	18	18	16	18	19	18
Influencing Others	19	19	19	19	19	17	18	19
Managing the Work of Others	20	20	20	20	20	19	20	20

Note. Participants indicated if they were currently working in a professional role; Faculty/Staff and Administrators were asked about currently working in an industry outside of their university work role. Sample sizes (Overall N = 24,910; Manufacturing N = 2,776; Professional Services N = 2,735; Consumer Services N = 1,829; Creative Industries N = 1,094; Healthcare N = 1,277; Government, Non-Profit N = 1,432; Banking & Finance N = 638)

Identification of the Most Critical Competencies

For the identification of the most critical competencies, Table 5 shows the number of competencies chosen by participants, with over 40% of participants choosing 10 competencies as critical. Table 6 shows the percentage of individuals who identified each competency as critical, as well as the rankings by role. Rank is the numerical order of the percentages, with 1 indicating that the competency was identified as critical by the highest percentage of individuals and 20 indicating that it was identified as critical by the lowest percentage of individuals. When the same percentage of individuals chose two competencies, the same rank was given so as not to exaggerate minor differences. As was found with the importance ratings, there is considerable consistency in the criticality rankings across roles.

Significant overlap exists between the top 10 competencies identified by importance and the top 10 identified by criticality. One competency, Generating Ideas & Innovating, was included in the 10 most important competencies but not the 10 competencies most frequently identified as critical. Another competency, Upholding Ethical Standards & Demonstrating Social Responsibility, was one of the top 10 competencies in terms of criticality but not importance. Otherwise all of the competencies were the same in both ranking lists, demonstrating a great deal of consistency in the rating tasks. Given the similarity in the results across role groups and the focus on data from employers, Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the importance and criticality of the competencies for the employer data.

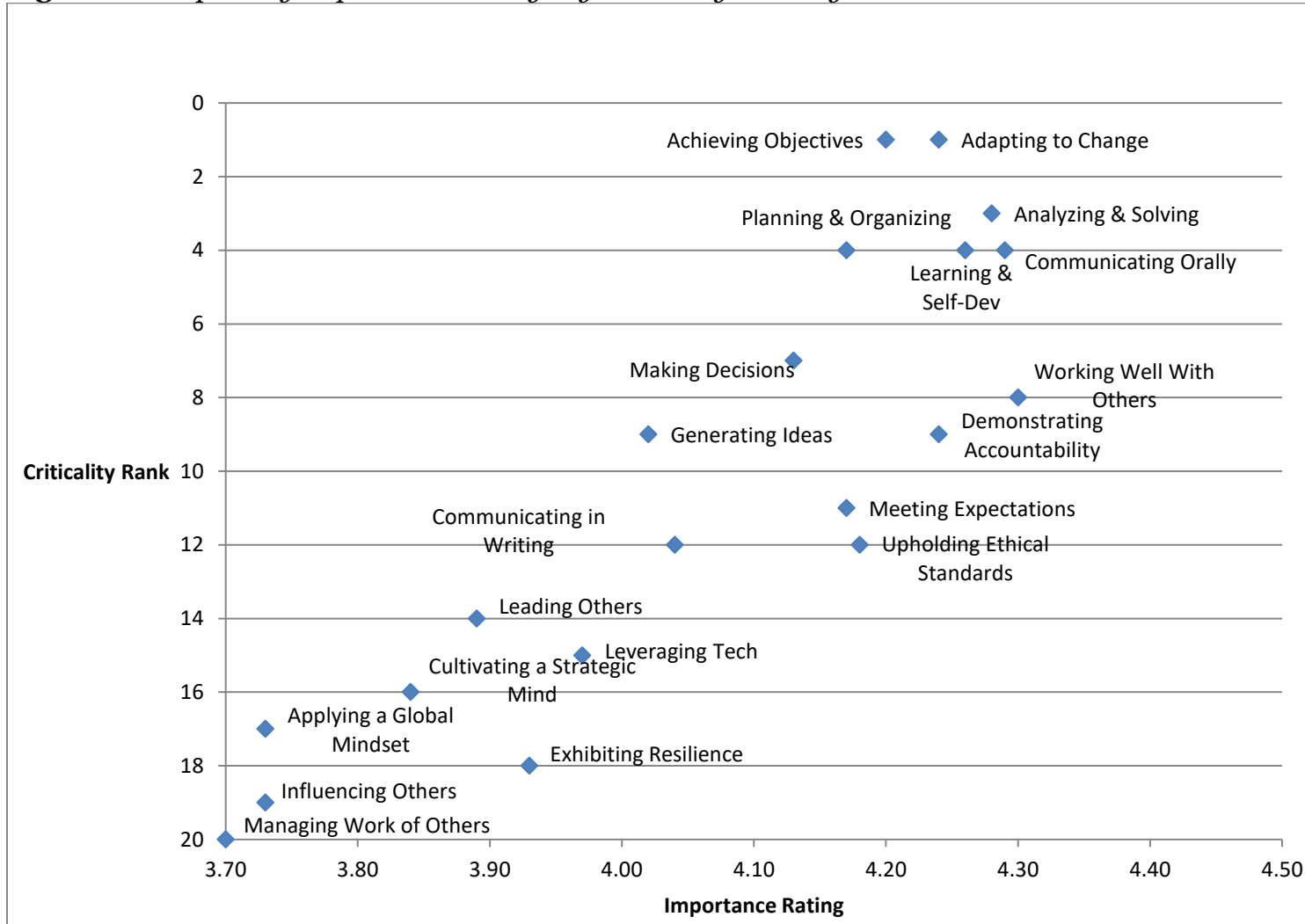**Table 5**: *Number of Competencies Chosen as Critical by Participants*

Number of Competencies Selected as Critical	N
5	4032
6	2369
7	2801
8	2787
9	2589
10	10178
Overall	**24756**

Note. 446 participants had full or partial competency rating data but no criticality ratings

Table 6: *Competency Ratings by Laureate Role and Overall*

Competency	Overall %	Rank	Students %	Rank	Faculty/Staff %	Rank	Administrator %	Rank	Alumni %	Rank	Employers %	Rank
Achieving Objectives	63%	1	63%	1	63%	3	66%	2	63%	1	63%	1
Adapting to Change	61%	2	58%	3	64%	2	64%	3	59%	4	63%	1
Analyzing & Solving Problems	61%	2	58%	3	66%	1	67%	1	62%	2	62%	3
Making Decisions	58%	4	59%	2	56%	4	59%	4	60%	3	54%	7
Communicating Orally	55%	5	55%	5	56%	4	51%	6	54%	7	55%	4
Planning & Organizing	55%	5	55%	6	54%	6	55%	5	57%	5	55%	4
Learning & Self-Development	53%	7	53%	7	52%	7	48%	7	55%	6	55%	4
Working Well With Others	51%	8	51%	8	52%	7	47%	8	47%	9	51%	8
Generating Ideas & Innovating	49%	9	51%	8	49%	10	47%	8	44%	10	46%	9
Demonstrating Accountability	46%	10	45%	10	49%	10	43%	10	48%	8	46%	9
Upholding Ethical Standards & Demonstrating Social Responsibility	38%	11	33%	12	51%	9	42%	11	33%	13	38%	12
Leading Others	36%	12	40%	11	32%	14	40%	12	34%	12	33%	14
Communicating in Writing	34%	13	29%	14	42%	12	33%	13	33%	13	38%	12
Meeting Customer/Stakeholder Expectations	32%	14	31%	13	28%	15	33%	13	35%	11	39%	11
Leveraging Technology	30%	15	28%	15	36%	13	30%	15	30%	15	29%	15
Cultivating a Strategic & Entrepreneurial Mindset	23%	16	24%	16	20%	17	26%	16	23%	16	23%	16
Applying a Global Mindset	22%	17	24%	16	21%	16	23%	17	20%	17	20%	17
Influencing Others	19%	18	21%	18	14%	19	18%	18	18%	18	18%	19
Exhibiting Resilience	15%	19	14%	19	16%	18	18%	18	15%	19	19%	18
Managing the Work of Others	13%	20	13%	20	12%	20	14%	20	12%	20	13%	20

Figure 1: *Competency Importance Ratings by Criticality Ranking*

Discussion

The purpose of the present field study was to determine which competencies were most salient for graduating college students entering the global professional workforce. Data were collected from a large global sample of students, alumni, faculty, staff, and employers. Our study is unique in its goal of establishing competencies relevant for global, rather than national, employability. The validated competencies are consistent with, but expand beyond, those used by others, such as the VALUE rubrics developed by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (Rhodes, 2010), the University of Kent Employability Skills (https://www.kent.ac.uk/ces/student/skills.html), among others. The results show that the most important competencies for new graduates entering the workforce are generally common across geographic regions and industries, with Communicating Orally, Working Well with Others, and Analyzing and Solving Problems as the core set of very important competencies. This finding is consistent with that of Rios et al. (2020), who found in a content analysis of job advertisements that oral and written communication, collaboration, and problem-solving skills were most important for employers. This finding may also be relatively stable; Robles (2012) found that among the most important soft skills at that time were teamwork and communication. One finding that was surprising was how consistently employers, students, and faculty were in ranking the importance of competencies; for example, this consistency was not found in other studies. For example, Karzunina et al. (2018) found that students tended not to understand how employers value various workplace skills. More recently, Succi and Canovi (2020) found that employers continue to rate soft skills as more important than students and graduates do and that the ranking of importance also differs.

Despite the conventional wisdom by some organizations that leadership is a highly important characteristic for all professional employees, competencies such as Managing the Work of Others, Leading Others, and Influencing Others were consistently rated lower in importance by employers across all roles and regions and may not be appropriate as the primary focus of skill development for new graduates. This finding is also consistent with Succi and Canovi (2020), who found that management skills and leadership skills are the lowest ranked by employers among a list of 20 soft skills. This may be due in part because, in most regions of the world, new graduates do not often enter the workforce in leadership roles. Also, Applying a Global Mindset was generally rated as being of low importance. Although cultural sensitivity can be important for some jobs, it may not be imperative for many entry-level professional roles. Alternatively, these leadership and global mindset competencies may be best developed on the job rather than at university or targeted to those students with an interest and an opportunity for global work assignments. Organizations hiring new graduates should consider incorporating the leadership and global mindset competencies into their training programs.

Significance

The contributions of this field study are substantial. To our knowledge, no competency modeling studies have been reported with a sample size this large and diverse and that have been validated by students, faculty, *and* employers. The competency survey was administered in over 30 countries in the major regions of the world. Furthermore, gaining the perspective of students, university employees, and private sector employers is rare for a competency modeling project. Additional evidence from the project shows that, for five key competencies, a cross-cultural assessment developed demonstrated measurement invariance, suggesting that assessment scores are consistent between European and Latin American contexts (Herde et al. (2019). Taken together, the diversity and varied experience levels of the sample and the statistical research of the resulting assessment demonstrate that the present competency framework provides greater generalizability than most competency modeling projects that are often idiosyncratic to specific roles, industries, subjects, or levels.

The identification of key competencies applicable across the world of work can be of significant benefit to universities and students. Many students entering university do not know specifically what career they will pursue, and individuals who begin working in one industry or role often change career paths at some point in their lives. It is extremely valuable to have a taxonomy of competencies that are broadly applicable across industries, roles, and regions to help students prepare for success regardless of the field or region in which they are eventually employed. For instance, university faculty and administrators can use the results of the validation study to develop curricula and programs that will be better able to foster important competencies to ensure that their students are better prepared as they enter the workplace. The rubrics appended to this study provide proficiency levels that can be used to develop student assessments. Students can use the information to help them prepare for job search activities and even career guidance. Embedding the competencies in the curriculum, and assessing those competencies, can provide valuable information to students regarding professional development needed to improve skills acquisition.

Oftentimes, competency models focus on a single organization. Given the scope of this project, this competency model may be used more broadly for hiring decisions and employee development as well as academic curricula. Consistent with Succi and Canovi (2020), we suggest that the results be used to promote further collaboration between employers and academic programs to ensure students are being trained in the most relevant skills and that students understand employers' priorities. Universities and employers can focus on cultivating competencies that are more important for their specific region. Appendix B provides examples of a rubric that can be used to assess development of a particular competency, including descriptions of different proficiency levels that can be used to help assess where individuals currently fall and what they need to do to develop to the next level.

Directions for Research

Future research would benefit from measuring students' competency levels and following students through multiple time points to track their progress and development. Ideally, a study should attempt to track students for some portion of their academic careers and into their professional careers. Further, future research projects should find ways to include criterion measures for further validation of competency models and measures.

Conclusion

As competency modeling continues to become more prevalent, broad benefits exist not only for employers but also for academic programs to have a better understanding of what makes for highly competent workers in an increasingly global workforce. The information reported here is a contribution to both the competency modeling literature as well as the academic literature on students' workplace competency development. We developed the project collaboratively with a large network of universities and implemented strategies and recommendations from academic literature during development. The project and the data presented have far-reaching implications for academia and industry, including (1) the validation of skills needed for students/graduates to work in the global economy, (2) a mechanism by which students can be evaluated in those skills at least prior to graduation, and (3) a mechanism by which programs can modify curricula to ensure that key competencies are met at graduation.

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Appendix A

Competencies & Definitions

Achieving Objectives—Accepts or sets demanding individual goals; Meets individual goals and objectives; Takes initiative to seek additional responsibilities, as appropriate; Evaluates work outcomes to ensure quality standards are met.

Adapting to Change—Adjusts work style and interpersonal behavior to fit different situations and environments; Accepts and integrates new ideas and information on their merits; Supports and complies with change initiatives; Works effectively when faced with ambiguity.

Analyzing and Solving Problems—Critically evaluates information and its sources; Identifies gaps in information and seeks appropriate sources to close them; Synthesizes and integrates information into what is already known about a topic; Recognizes patterns in information to identify the bigger picture; Follows best practices and appropriately analyzes quantitative and qualitative data; Identifies and independently solves work problems, as appropriate; Considers multiple approaches when solving problems.

Applying a Global Mindset—Demonstrates interest in, and understanding of, other geographic regions, languages, and cultures; Recognizes own biases and balances local and global perspectives; Works effectively with a global community; Shows an understanding of other countries' standards, certifications, and processes.

Communicating in Writing—Writes professionally using proper grammar, punctuation, spelling, and vocabulary; Writes in an accurate, engaging manner, citing sources as appropriate; Writes in an organized, clear, and concise manner; Creates documents with structure, length, and language appropriate for the topic and audience; Communicates effectively in a non-native written language required for the job.

Communicating Orally—Organizes thoughts and speaks professionally, using proper language and vocabulary; Speaks clearly and displays confidence; Accurately communicates ideas and concepts verbally; Skillfully delivers formal presentations; Actively listens to others and adjusts to their needs; Communicates effectively in a non-native spoken language required for the job.

Cultivating a Strategic and Entrepreneurial Mindset—Understands own organization's offerings and keeps current on the offerings provided by organizations with competing or complementary services and/or products; Aligns own work with the organization's strategy and objectives; Monitors economic, market, social, and societal conditions and trends; Understands and acts upon financial metrics to minimize waste, improve efficiency, and maximize impact; Identifies and strategically addresses opportunities to grow offerings or expand into new areas.

Demonstrating Accountability—Works independently to achieve results; Takes ownership of work and follows through on commitments; Follows work policies, procedures, and guidelines; Appropriately questions authority in a culturally-sensitive manner when necessary; Assimilates to the values, standards, and culture of the organization.

Exhibiting Resilience—Recognizes own emotions and regulates how they are expressed; Maintains focus and productivity under pressure; Prioritizes personal well-being and work-life balance and diminishes the negative effects of stress; Develops and displays confidence in own capabilities despite obstacles or setbacks.

Generating Ideas and Innovating—Generates novel or innovative ideas within own and other areas of expertise; Displays openness to the ideas of others; Proactively identifies opportunities for positive changes to approaches, processes, or products; Demonstrates curiosity and appropriately experiments with new ideas to determine the benefits and risks associated with them.

Influencing Others—Offers suggestions and advocates for own ideas; Understands how own actions are interpreted by others and creates a positive impression; Navigates the formal and informal organizational structure; Sees issues from others' perspectives and effectively negotiates with them; Adapts style to gain agreement and commitment.

Leading Others—Provides guidance to others; Motivates and encourages others; Willingly shares information, trains and mentors others on areas of expertise; Develops and communicates a compelling vision that is aligned with the organizational strategy.

Learning and Self-Development—Identifies and addresses own knowledge gaps and training needs; Continually expands own knowledge and skills; Applies knowledge and training to professional contexts; Critically evaluates own strengths and weaknesses and pursues development; Seeks feedback and learns from successes and failures; Learns from others and seeks mentors.

Leveraging Technology—Applies technology tools and techniques to gather and store information; Uses technology and visual aids to facilitate and enhance communications; Leverages standard technology and applications to complete work; Applies profession-specific or other specialized applications to complete work; Stays up-to-date on technological changes.

Making Decisions—Identifies available options when making decisions; Evaluates alternative options that have been identified; Makes sound decisions based on available information; Makes decisions in a timely manner.

Managing the Work of Others—Delegates work tasks to others; Monitors performance of team members; Provides others with clear direction and expectations; Provides feedback and coaching to others.

Meeting Customer/Stakeholder Expectations—Understands and meets internal and external customer/stakeholder needs and expectations; Responds to customer/stakeholder requests in a timely manner; Balances customer/stakeholder demands with the organization's objectives.

Planning and Organizing—Sets project objectives, strategies, and milestones; Tracks progress toward project completion; Plans and prioritizes activities, and adjusts plans based on changes; Identifies and obtains the resources needed to accomplish work; Manages time effectively and completes work on schedule.

Upholding Ethical Standards and Demonstrating Social Responsibility—Recognizes ethical challenges and maintains ethical standards; Interacts honestly and transparently with others; Demonstrates integrity and builds trust by keeping promises and admitting mistakes; Acts responsibly to minimize the negative effects of own choices on other individuals, the community, and the environment; Maintains confidentiality of information; Makes sustainable social improvements.

Working Well With Others—Develops and maintains effective working relationships; Interacts effectively with people from different backgrounds; Listens to others and values and incorporates diverse viewpoints; Supports team decisions once they have been made; Adjusts own workload to help meet team commitments, as appropriate; Recognizes and demonstrates empathy for others' feelings, needs, and concerns; Appropriately resolves own work disagreements.

Appendix B

Laureate Education Workplace Skills Competency Framework Rubric

1. Making Decisions

Behaviors	Proficiency Levels		
	Level I: Basic	**Level II: Intermediate**	**Level III: Advanced**
A. Identifies available options when making decisions	Identifies all obvious options when making decisions	Identifies all obvious options and some less obvious options when making decisions	Asks what-if questions to expand decision-making options beyond the obvious choices and identifies a thorough list of viable alternatives
B. Evaluates alternative options that have been identified	Evaluates the basic advantages and disadvantages of alternative options	Evaluates the feasibility, desirability, and expected consequences of alternative options	Thoroughly evaluates the feasibility, desirability, and potential short- and long-term consequences of different options, as well as their impact on various stakeholder groups
C. Makes sound decisions based on available information	Considers available information when making decisions, but may occasionally over-rely on intuition or demonstrate some logical flaws in reasoning	Appropriately balances intuition with verified information when making decisions and avoids logical flaws in reasoning	Makes sound decisions based on the integration of available information and intuition gained from relevant experience; exhibits highly logical and sound reasoning
D. Makes decisions in a timely manner	Makes straightforward decisions in a reasonable amount of time	Makes moderately complex decisions in a timely manner	Makes highly complex decisions in a timely manner

2. Accountability

Behaviors	Proficiency Levels		
	Level I: Basic	**Level II: Intermediate**	**Level III: Advanced**
A. **Works independently to achieve results**	Works under the direction of others, but does not require constant supervision	Completes work with minimal supervision once given initial instructions	After receiving general guidance, identifies work that needs to be done and completes it independently
B. **Takes ownership of work and follows through on commitments**	Demonstrates responsibility for work assignments and generally follows through on work commitments	Takes ownership of work and views problems that may arise as one's own responsibility; diligently follows through on commitments	Demonstrates a strong sense of personal ownership for work and continually looks for opportunities to improve work outcomes; always follows through on commitments
C. **Follows work policies, procedures, and guidelines**	Understands and follows work policies, procedures, and guidelines	Understands and follows all work policies, procedures, and guidelines, and encourages others to do likewise	Understands and follows all work policies, procedures, and guidelines, and identifies ways to better align private or public sector business practices with regulatory or professional constraints
D. **Appropriately questions authority in a culturally-sensitive manner when necessary**	Does not typically question authority, but does so appropriately and in a culturally-sensitive manner if necessary	Appropriately and constructively questions authority in a culturally-sensitive manner to prevent poor decisions or counterproductive actions	Appropriately and constructively questions authority in a culturally-sensitive manner when faced with an opportunity to improve decision-making or functional/organizational performance
E. **Assimilates to the values, standards, and culture of the organization**	Demonstrates respect for, and understanding of, the values, standards, and culture of the organization	Recognizes and adapts behaviors to the values, standards, and culture of the organization	Uses in-depth knowledge and understanding of one's own values, as well as the organization's values, standards, and culture, to assimilate to the organization's expectations

3. Working Well with Others

Behaviors	Proficiency Levels		
	Level I: Basic	**Level II: Intermediate**	**Level III: Advanced**
A. **Develops and maintains effective working relationships**	Develops and maintains cooperative working relationships with team members over the duration of a project	Develops and maintains effective working relationships with a variety of individuals both within and outside of the immediate work group for an extended time	Develops highly effective, collaborative working relationships with a wide network of individuals, including those with different or competing priorities and objectives, and maintains constructive relationships over an extended period of time
B. **Interacts effectively with people from different backgrounds**	Works respectfully with people from different backgrounds	Appreciates diversity and interacts effectively with people from different backgrounds	Welcomes diversity and seeks to develop working relationships with a wide variety of people from different backgrounds
C. **Listens to others and values and incorporates diverse viewpoints**	Listens to others; is generally open to considering others' thoughts and opinions	Carefully listens to others; understands, respects, and fully considers diverse thoughts and opinions	Actively listens to others; solicits and incorporates diverse thoughts and opinions, and leverages different viewpoints to improve the quality of group interactions and decisions
D. **Supports team decisions once they have been made**	Follows team decisions once they have been made	Supports team decisions once they have been made even if own recommendations were not adopted	Actively promotes team decisions and demonstrates strong commitment to the chosen course of action even if own recommendations were not adopted
E. **Adjusts own workload to help meet team commitments, as appropriate**	Keeps up with own work to help meet team commitments	Adjusts own workload to accommodate changing team needs when asked to do so	Maintains awareness of changing team needs and proactively adjusts own workload to ensure team commitments are met

Continued

F. Recognizes and demonstrates empathy for others' feelings, needs, and concerns	Recognizes others' feelings, needs, and concerns	Takes an active interest in, and demonstrates empathy and support for the feelings, needs, and concerns of others	Attends to emotional cues and engages with others to obtain an understanding of their feelings, needs, and concerns; withholds judgment and provides empathy and support
G. Appropriately resolves own work disagreements	With guidance, handles own work-related disagreements with others in a way that prevents negative situations from escalating	As appropriate, independently handles own work-related disagreements and resolves them in an acceptable manner	As appropriate, independently handles own work-related disagreements and resolves them in a constructive and timely manner that enhances working relationships

4. Influencing Others

Behaviors	Proficiency Levels		
	Level I: Basic	**Level II: Intermediate**	**Level III: Advanced**
A. **Offers suggestions and advocates for own ideas**	Makes suggestions or offers ideas when asked and generates an appropriate response to opposition	Confidently makes suggestions and voices ideas; anticipates obvious objections to ideas and prepares appropriate responses accordingly	Voices ideas with conviction and actively works to influence others to gain support; anticipates a wide variety of oppositions to ideas and presents solid arguments to address these challenges
B. **Understands how own actions are interpreted by others and creates a positive impression**	Is generally aware of how own actions are interpreted by others and attempts to create a positive impression	Is aware of how own actions are interpreted by others and actively manages behaviors to create a positive impression	Is aware of how own actions are interpreted by others and actively manages behaviors to establish a long-term positive impression
C. **Navigates the formal and informal organizational structure**	Develops an awareness of the formal and informal organizational structure and key internal stakeholders	Is knowledgeable regarding the organization's formal and informal structure and internal stakeholders and navigates organizational politics to avoid unnecessary impediments to accomplishing work	Has a thorough knowledge of the organization's formal and informal structure and internal and external stakeholders; leverages organizational politics to more effectively accomplish work and influence outcomes
D. **Sees issues from others' perspectives and effectively negotiates with them**	Sees issues from others' perspectives and attempts to negotiate with them	Sees issues from others' perspectives and negotiates with them by exploring a range of possibilities, recognizing the need for mutual concessions so all parties feel satisfied with the outcome	Sees issues from others' perspectives and effectively negotiates with individuals internal and external to the organization by adopting a range of approaches and maintaining open communication throughout the process to ensure all parties feel positive about the outcome

Continued

E. **Adapts style to gain agreement and commitment**	Uses information, facts, and data to attempt to influence others	Adapts style and approach to align with others' needs and interests in order to effectively influence, reach agreement, and gain commitment from others	Skillfully guides conversations to uncover paths to agreement that leave all parties fully committed to the chosen course of action

5. Communicating Orally

Behaviors	Proficiency Levels		
	Level I: Basic	**Level II: Intermediate**	**Level III: Advanced**
A. Organizes thoughts and speaks professionally, using proper language and vocabulary	Uses language and vocabulary appropriate for a professional work environment	Develops and synthesizes ideas to explain or discuss information in an organized manner, using precise language and vocabulary	Develops and synthesizes ideas to skillfully organize information, using language and vocabulary that is specifically tailored to the audience and maximizes understanding
B. Speaks clearly and displays confidence	Speaks clearly most of the time, but may lack confidence at times	Speaks clearly with appropriate pacing and displays confidence when speaking about familiar topics	Speaks clearly with appropriate pacing, pauses, volume changes, and emphasis, and displays confidence when speaking about a wide variety of topics
C. Accurately communicates ideas and concepts verbally	Accurately communicates basic information verbally	Accurately communicates ambiguous or somewhat complex concepts and ideas verbally	Accurately and concisely communicates ambiguous or complex concepts and ideas in an easy-to-understand manner
D. Skillfully delivers formal presentations	Successfully delivers formal presentations to internal groups, but may need additional polish and skill	Skillfully delivers engaging formal presentations to internal and external groups	Skillfully delivers engaging and influential formal presentations to internal and external groups, easily adapting to different settings (e.g., conferences, department meetings)

Continued

E. Actively listens to others and adjusts to their needs	Listens to others and responds to their questions or requests	Actively listens to others, checks their understanding, responds to questions, and adjusts content or style if necessary	Actively listens to others, anticipates their needs, monitors their understanding via verbal and non-verbal cues, responds to questions, and adjusts content or style as necessary
F. Communicates effectively in a non-native spoken language required for the job	Has a basic command of a non-native spoken language required for the job; can be understood by others but speaks in a rudimentary way	Has an intermediate command of a non-native spoken language required for the job; is able to communicate with an accurate and varied vocabulary	Has a thorough command of a non-native spoken language required for the job; is able to speak precisely with nuanced language

6. Communicating in Writing

Behaviors	Proficiency Levels		
	Level I: Basic	**Level II: Intermediate**	**Level III: Advanced**
A. Writes professionally using proper grammar, punctuation, spelling, and vocabulary	Grammar, punctuation, spelling, and vocabulary are typically correct in formal documents, but may be too casual in informal communications	Uses proper grammar, punctuation, spelling, and vocabulary in all communications	Uses proper grammar, punctuation, spelling, and vocabulary, striking the appropriate professional tone for different types of communications
B. Writes in an accurate, engaging manner, citing sources as appropriate	Accurately conveys basic information in a way that engages audiences interested in the topic, citing sources as appropriate	Accurately conveys ambiguous or somewhat complex information in a way that engages audiences both interested and new to the topic, citing sources as appropriate	Accurately conveys highly complex and ambiguous information in a way that engages a variety of audiences regardless of the topic, citing sources as appropriate
C. Writes in an organized, clear, and concise manner	Writing is understandable, but not always presented in an organized, concise, or cohesive manner	On familiar topics, writing is well organized, clear, concise, and supports goals	Regardless of the topic, writing is organized with a clear structure that logically, concisely, and purposefully presents ideas and supports goals
D. Creates documents with structure, length, and language appropriate for the topic and audience	Structure, length, language, and degree of detail match own level of knowledge rather than the audience's needs	On familiar topics, structure, length, language, and level of detail match the audience's needs	Regardless of topic or audience, writing style, structure, length, language, and level of detail anticipate the audience's needs

E. Communicates effectively in a non-native written language required for the job	Has a basic command of a non-native written language required for the job; can create simple, accurate documents with the aid of a dictionary or translation device	Has an intermediate command of a non-native written language required for the job; can create accurate documents using correct subject-verb agreement and verb tense without help	Has a thorough command of a non-native written language required for the job; is able to create complex accurate documents that include precise, nuanced vocabulary and phrasing

7. Learning and Self-Development

Behaviors	Proficiency Levels		
	Level I: Basic	**Level II: Intermediate**	**Level III: Advanced**
A. Identifies and addresses own knowledge gaps and training needs	Recognizes own knowledge gaps and training needs once they have been pointed out by others, and exerts some effort to close those gaps	Independently recognizes own knowledge gaps and training needs in area of expertise, and exerts deliberate effort to close any gaps	Proactively seeks to identify knowledge gaps and training needs in own and related areas of expertise, and systematically exerts effort to close those gaps
B. Continually expands own knowledge and skills	Attends mandatory courses/training programs and reads assigned documents to expand skills and knowledge in own field of expertise	Independently seeks opportunities to attend optional relevant training programs and searches for supplemental reading to expand skills and knowledge in own field of expertise	Independently develops informal or formal self-learning programs in a strategic manner to ensure a constant expansion of knowledge and skills in own and related fields of expertise
C. Applies knowledge and training to professional contexts	Is generally able to apply new knowledge to work tasks, but may have difficulty when the application of knowledge to the task is less obvious or out of context	Frequently and effectively applies new knowledge to work tasks	Consistently seeks and identifies novel ways to apply relevant knowledge to a wide variety of work tasks and practical applications
D. Critically evaluates own strengths and weaknesses and pursues development	Recognizes own obvious strengths and weaknesses, and works to improve areas requiring immediate development	Regularly evaluates own strengths and weaknesses and pursues opportunities to develop in necessary areas	Systematically evaluates own strengths and weaknesses, critically evaluating both obvious and subtle areas for development and strategically pursuing opportunities for both short and long-term professional development

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E. Seeks feedback and learns from successes and failures	Listens to, understands, and accepts both positive and negative feedback offered by team members	Solicits feedback from team members; evaluates and reflects on negative feedback to understand what went wrong and identify lessons to apply in the future	Routinely solicits and integrates feedback from team members and other professional contacts; thoroughly evaluates and reflects on both successes and failures to improve future performance
F. Learns from others and seeks mentors	Identifies lessons from the experiences of others and incorporates those lessons into own work behaviors	Learns from others' experiences and seeks work-related advice and guidance from experienced professionals	Willingly solicits advice and learns from others; actively seeks and develops mentoring relationships with experienced professionals

8. Analyzing and Solving Problems

Behaviors	Proficiency Levels		
	Level I: Basic	**Level II: Intermediate**	**Level III: Advanced**
A. **Critically evaluates information and its sources**	Considers the source, accuracy, and value of information before accepting and using it	Establishes basic criteria to evaluate the source, accuracy, and value of information, and only uses information that passes these criteria	Establishes advanced criteria to ensure that information comes only from credible, reliable sources
B. **Identifies gaps in information and seeks appropriate sources to close them**	Identifies when there are obvious gaps in information and seeks appropriate sources to address those gaps	Identifies and seeks to close obvious and subtle gaps in information with appropriate sources	Recognizes and reconciles all meaningful gaps in available information with appropriate sources
C. **Synthesizes and integrates information into what is already known about a topic**	Synthesizes and integrates basic information into what is already known about a topic	Synthesizes and integrates fairly complex or ambiguous information into what is already known about a topic	Expertly integrates and synthesizes highly complex and ambiguous information into what is already known about a topic
D. **Recognizes patterns in information to identify the bigger picture**	Identifies basic patterns in information but tends to view data points separately	Recognizes that patterns exist in seemingly unrelated qualitative or quantitative data and works to determine the relationship between them to uncover the bigger picture	Analyzes complex relationships in information not outwardly related, identifying subtle relationships and patterns to uncover the bigger picture

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E. Follows best practices and appropriately analyzes quantitative and qualitative data	Follows best practices and performs basic logical, mathematical, or linguistic analyses of information	Applies principles of relevant theory and functional best practices to the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data; performs intermediate logical, mathematical, or linguistic analyses of information	Fully integrates and applies complex theory, best practices, and sound rationale to the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data; performs advanced logical, mathematical, or linguistic analyses to derive full value from information
F. Identifies and independently solves work problems, as appropriate	Identifies and alerts others about existing problems; independently solves basic work problems and seeks guidance to solve more complex issues	Identifies and alerts others about current or potential problems or obstacles; independently solves fairly complex work problems, as appropriate	Effectively anticipates problems and obstacles and works to prevent them; independently solves ambiguous and complex work problems, viewing them as opportunities to learn and improve work processes
G. Considers multiple approaches when solving problems	Considers multiple approaches when solving problems but tends to rely on well-tested or traditional solutions	Considers alternative perspectives and approaches when solving problems and is willing to try a new approach	Identifies new ways to solve problems in order to better meet the needs of the situation

9. Generating Ideas and Innovating

Behaviors	Proficiency Levels		
	Level I: Basic	Level II: Intermediate	Level III: Advanced
A. Generates novel or innovative ideas within own and other areas of expertise	Generates basic, and occasionally novel, ideas within own area of expertise	Generates fairly innovative ideas within own area of expertise	Generates innovative ideas in a variety of different areas of expertise
B. Displays openness to the ideas of others	Demonstrates receptiveness to the ideas of others	Recognizes and builds upon the ideas of others	Actively encourages and stimulates idea generation in others
C. Proactively identifies opportunities for positive changes to approaches, processes, or products	Identifies occasional opportunities for positive changes to existing approaches, processes, or products	Proactively identifies opportunities for positive changes to existing approaches, processes, and products, as well as identifies some prospects for impactful innovation	Proactively identifies numerous opportunities for positive changes to existing approaches, processes, and products, highlighting multiple avenues for impactful innovation
D. Demonstrates curiosity and appropriately experiments with new ideas to determine the benefits and risks associated with them	Considers the more obvious potential benefits and risks associated with a new idea, and pursues the idea if it seems feasible	Considers a broad range of potential benefits and risks associated with a new idea; asks questions and engages in basic experimentation to help determine if a new idea should be pursued	Considers the full range of potential benefits and risks associated with a new idea, and engages in thorough experimentation to determine the best approach

10. Planning and Organizing

Behaviors	Proficiency Levels		
	Level I: Basic	Level II: Intermediate	Level III: Advanced
A. **Sets project objectives, strategies, and milestones**	Sets broad project objectives and strategies	Sets specific project objectives and strategies, and identifies major milestones	Sets specific project objectives and strategies, and defines success for each; identifies and documents all relevant milestones
B. **Tracks progress toward project completion**	Maintains a general awareness of project progress and status	Regularly monitors and communicates project status using basic metrics or key performance indicators	Continually monitors and communicates project status using advanced metrics and key performance indicators
C. **Plans and prioritizes activities, and adjusts plans based on changes**	Plans and prioritizes activities when beginning work; evaluates and adjusts plans to account for changing priorities, but may struggle when a major shift in priorities occurs	Plans and prioritizes activities in advance of beginning work; evaluates and adjusts plans to account for changing priorities without much loss of productivity or focus	Thoroughly plans and prioritizes activities well in advance of beginning work; effectively evaluates and adjusts plans to account for changing priorities without losing productivity or focus
D. **Identifies and obtains the resources needed to accomplish work**	Correctly identifies most necessary resources to accomplish work and generally ensures those resources will be available when needed	Correctly identifies and obtains all necessary resources to accomplish work and secures resources in a timely manner	Correctly identifies and obtains all necessary resources to accomplish work well in advance, and secures resources in a way that effectively balances own needs with those of others in the organization as well as time and cost
E. **Manages time effectively and completes work on schedule**	Manages time acceptably and typically completes work on schedule	Manages time effectively; acts quickly to complete high-priority and urgent tasks and completes remaining tasks in a reasonable amount of time	Manages time effectively; acts with a strong sense of urgency to complete all assigned work, effectively matching pacing to the requirements of the task

11. Achieving Objectives

Behaviors	Proficiency Levels		
	Level I: Basic	**Level II: Intermediate**	**Level III: Advanced**
A. **Accepts or sets demanding individual goals**	Accepts moderately challenging individual goals and exerts effort to try to achieve them	Sets or accepts demanding individual goals and exerts extra effort, when needed, to try to achieve them	Seeks demanding individual goals and consistently exerts extra effort to try to achieve them
B. **Meets individual goals and objectives**	Typically meets fundamental individual goals and objectives	Consistently meets challenging individual goals and objectives	Regularly exceeds challenging individual goals and objectives
C. **Takes initiative to seek additional responsibilities, as appropriate**	After completing own work, takes on additional responsibilities when it is convenient to do so	In addition to completing own work, volunteers for appropriate additional responsibilities within own work area	In addition to completing own work, proactively seeks out additional opportunities and stretch assignments both inside and outside of own work area, as appropriate
D. **Evaluates work outcomes to ensure quality standards are met**	Evaluates work outcomes to ensure basic quality standards are met	Regularly evaluates work outcomes to ensure work delivered meets high-quality standards	Consistently evaluates work outcomes to ensure work delivered meets high-quality standards; does not compromise on quality even when under pressure to cut corners

12. Customer/Stakeholder Orientation

Behaviors	Proficiency Levels		
	Level I: Basic	Level II: Intermediate	Level III: Advanced
A. **Understands and meets internal and external customer/stakeholder needs and expectations**	Understands and meets stated internal and external customer/stakeholder needs and expectations	Proactively works with internal and external customers/stakeholders to fully understand and meet their needs and expectations, including those not directly expressed	Consistently delivers products or services that exceed internal and external customers'/stakeholders' needs and expectations, including those not directly expressed
B. **Responds to customer/stakeholder requests in a timely manner**	Responds to internal and external customer/stakeholder requests within the required timeframe	Eagerly responds to internal and external customer/stakeholder requests in a timely manner	Responds to internal and external customer/stakeholder requests with a sense of urgency; conveys to customers/stakeholders that they are a top priority by finding resourceful ways to address their needs
C. **Balances customer/stakeholder demands with the organization's objectives**	Seeks appropriate guidance when customers/stakeholders demand more than has been agreed upon	Generally balances additional customer/stakeholder demands with the needs of the organization in a manner that is acceptable to all parties	Expertly balances additional customer/stakeholder demands with the needs of the organization in a manner that meets the major objectives of all parties

13. Strategic/Entrepreneurial Mindset

Behaviors	Proficiency Levels		
	Level I: Basic	**Level II: Intermediate**	**Level III: Advanced**
A. **Understands own organization's offerings and keeps current on the offerings provided by organizations with competing or complementary services and/or products**	Understands own organization's offerings, and maintains a basic understanding of the offerings provided by organizations with competing or complementary products and/or services	Maintains a detailed understanding of the offerings provided by organizations with competing or complementary products and/or services, and how they compare to own organization's offerings to customers or the public	Maintains a thorough understanding of the offerings provided by organizations with competing or complementary products and/or services, as well as the key differentiators of own organization's offerings to customers or the public
B. **Aligns own work with the organization's strategy and objectives**	Has a general understanding of how own role affects the organization and aligns efforts with the organization's stated strategy and objectives	Has a solid understanding of the impact of own role and aligns efforts in a way that improves outcomes for the organization	Thoroughly understands the organization's broader strategy and plans own work to maximize impact
C. **Monitors economic, market, social, and societal conditions and trends**	Maintains a general awareness of economic, market, social, and societal conditions and trends	Understands how economic, market, social, and societal conditions and trends affect the organization, customers, or the public	Closely monitors economic, market, social, and societal conditions and trends, and understands the direct and indirect impacts on the organization, customers, or the public

D. Understands and acts upon financial metrics to minimize waste, improve efficiency, and maximize impact	Demonstrates a basic understanding of financial metrics used by the organization and works to minimize waste, improve efficiency, and maximize impact	Understands and uses key financial metrics to balance costs and benefits to the organization, minimize waste, improve efficiency, and, maximize impact	Understands, leverages, and shares key financial information to improve services or drive competitive advantage for the organization; systematically identifies ways to balance costs and benefits to the organization, as well as minimize waste, improve efficiency, and maximize impact
E. Identifies and strategically addresses opportunities to grow offerings or expand into new areas	Recognizes and investigates options to capitalize on small-scale opportunities that are directly related to current work activities	Identifies small- to medium-scale opportunities to grow offerings or expand into new areas; investigates options and takes steps to capitalize on these opportunities	Seeks and identifies small-to large-scale opportunities to grow offerings or expand into new areas; thoroughly investigates and strategically addresses these opportunities

14. Ethics and Social Responsibility

Behaviors	Proficiency Levels		
	Level I: Basic	**Level II: Intermediate**	**Level III: Advanced**
A. Recognizes ethical challenges and maintains ethical standards	Recognizes ethical challenges and maintains ethical standards; seeks guidance if unsure of appropriate approach	Recognizes ethical challenges and maintains ethical standards even when faced with some external pressure to do otherwise	Recognizes ethical challenges and maintains high ethical standards despite strong external pressures to do otherwise
B. Interacts honestly and transparently with others	Interacts honestly with others	Interacts honestly and transparently with others, even in situations where the truth may be difficult to communicate or for others to hear	Acts as a role model for interacting honestly and transparently with others in difficult situations despite potential undesirable consequences
C. Demonstrates integrity and builds trust by keeping promises and admitting mistakes	Demonstrates integrity and builds trust by regularly keeping promises and admitting mistakes	Demonstrates integrity and builds trust by consistently keeping promises and admitting mistakes, even when it is challenging to do so	Acts as a role model for demonstrating integrity and building trust by always keeping promises and transparently admitting mistakes, even when it is very challenging to do so
D. Acts responsibly to minimize the negative effects of own choices on other individuals, the community, and the environment	Acts responsibly to ensure own actions do not harm other individuals, the community, or the environment	Balances actions that address own agenda with sensitivity to the impact of those actions on other individuals, the broader community, and the environment	Consistently makes socially and environmentally responsible choices that respect the rights of other individuals and the community, and minimize harm to the environment

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E. Maintains confidentiality of information	Recognizes what information is confidential and/or sensitive and avoids sharing this information inappropriately	Has a solid understanding of what information is considered confidential or sensitive and handles this information appropriately	Ensures all team members understand how to appropriately handle sensitive or confidential information and ensures the tools and processes are in place to do so effectively
F. Makes sustainable social improvements	Participates in activities that lead to social improvements	Seeks opportunities to introduce initiatives within own area that promote sustainable social improvements	Leads initiatives that create awareness and promote significant social improvements across the organization

15. Global Mindset

Behaviors	Proficiency Levels		
	Level I: Basic	**Level II: Intermediate**	**Level III: Advanced**
A. **Demonstrates interest in, and understanding of, other geographic regions, languages, and cultures**	Is open to learning about other geographic regions, languages, and cultures	Has interest in other geographic regions, languages, and cultures, and views situations with cultural considerations in mind	Has strong interest in and knowledge of other geographic regions, languages, and cultures, and competently applies cultural awareness to work
B. **Recognizes own biases and balances local and global perspectives**	Is able to recognize how local ways of thinking may bias own view and works to understand a more global perspective	Considers situations from the perspective of others from different backgrounds; recognizes internal biases and tries to balance local and global perspectives	Transcends local ideas and ways of thinking by routinely examining situations from the perspective of others from different backgrounds, correcting for own biases and balancing local and global perspectives
C. **Works effectively with a global community**	Works effectively with individuals from different workgroups and locations	Works effectively with individuals from a wide variety of organizational areas and global locations	Seeks opportunities to work globally by developing partnerships with individuals from other areas and locations and looks for opportunities for collaboration
D. **Shows an understanding of other countries' standards, certifications, and processes**	Shows awareness that standards, certifications, and processes differ by country and knows where to locate relevant information	Maintains up-to-date knowledge of the standards, certifications, and process requirements of countries in which own team frequently performs work	Routinely seeks out information and updates to maintain an in-depth understanding of the standards, certifications, and process requirements of all countries in which the organization operates

16. Adapting to Change

Behaviors	Proficiency Levels		
	Level I: Basic	**Level II: Intermediate**	**Level III: Advanced**
A. **Adjusts work style and interpersonal behavior to fit different situations and environments**	Adjusts work style and interpersonal behavior when asked or required to do so, such as when in a new work environment	Independently adjusts work style and interpersonal behavior to fit most situations and work environments	Anticipates the need to adjust work style and adapt behavior to fit nearly every situation or work environment
B. **Accepts and integrates new ideas and information on their merits**	Considers the merits of new ideas and information	Accepts and integrates new ideas and information on their merits, even if contrary to personal opinion or previous experiences	Consistently solicits and willingly accepts and integrates new ideas and information on their merits, even if contrary to existing knowledge or opinion
C. **Supports and complies with change initiatives**	Understands change initiatives and makes efforts to comply	Accepts, supports, and complies with change initiatives	Champions change initiatives, acting as a role model for others
D. **Works effectively when faced with ambiguity**	Addresses ambiguity by seeking clarification from others, which may at times slow down productivity	When faced with ambiguity, quickly seeks clarification or makes own decisions as appropriate while maintaining productivity	Uses ambiguity as an opportunity to make a greater impact by setting a new direction that is aligned with organizational, government, community, academic, or customer needs

17. Resilience

Behaviors	Proficiency Levels		
	Level I: Basic	Level II: Intermediate	Level III: Advanced
A. Recognizes own emotions and regulates how they are expressed	Recognizes own emotions and avoids overly emotional displays, but may exhibit impatience or frustration when under stress	Recognizes own emotions and generally projects a positive attitude; refrains from displaying emotions in a negative manner	Recognizes own emotions and consistently projects a positive attitude and expresses emotions appropriately, even under the most stressful circumstances
B. Maintains focus and productivity under pressure	Handles pressure with little loss of focus or productivity	Maintains focus and productivity levels when under pressure	Increases focus and productivity levels when under pressure and is resilient when faced with work problems
C. Prioritizes personal well-being and work-life balance and diminishes the negative effects of stress	Knows self-care is important and attempts to manage stress, but may not be able to prevent work pressures from impacting personal well-being at times	Finds appropriate ways to diminish work pressures and minimize the negative impact of stress on personal well-being and work-life balance	Makes personal well-being and work-life balance a priority, and successfully alleviates work pressures and stress through healthy outlets
D. Develops and displays confidence in own capabilities despite obstacles or setbacks	Develops and displays confidence in own capabilities despite minor obstacles or setbacks	Exhibits confidence in own capabilities when faced with ambiguous situations, obstacles, or setbacks	Consistently exhibits confidence in own capabilities when faced with complex, ambiguous situations or despite substantial setbacks or significant obstacles

18. Leading Others

Behaviors	Proficiency Levels		
	Level I: Basic	**Level II: Intermediate**	**Level III: Advanced**
A. Provides guidance to others	Provides informal guidance to team members when necessary or when requested	Provides guidance to others on tasks or projects within own area of expertise	Leads informal teams with clear and accomplished guidance in both own area and related areas of expertise
B. Motivates and encourages others	Encourages and offers support to team members when needed	Works to understand what drives others and tailors style to attempt to motivate individual team members	Is a role model for contributing to a positive work environment where individual motivations are understood and team members want to perform at their best
C. Willingly shares information, trains, and mentors others on areas of expertise	Shares relevant information, knowledge, and skills with others	Regularly shares information with others, and occasionally trains or mentors team members on areas of expertise	Proactively engages in opportunities to share information with others, and frequently trains or mentors team members on areas of expertise
D. Develops and communicates a compelling vision that is aligned with the organizational strategy	Develops a vision for own work and aligns the vision to the organization's overall strategy	Develops a vision aligned with the organization's strategy for own work area, and shares this vision with key stakeholders	Develops a compelling vision aligned with the organization's strategy for own unit or program, and explores future possibilities with appropriate stakeholders

19. Managing the Work of Others

Behaviors	Proficiency Levels		
	Level I: Basic	**Level II: Intermediate**	**Level III: Advanced**
A. **Delegates work tasks to others**	Delegates tasks to others to ensure all work is completed	Delegates work tasks based on the individual strengths of team members	Aligns delegated work tasks with the strengths, interests, and development needs of team members and the goals of the work unit
B. **Monitors performance of team members**	Monitors performance of team members to ensure work meets quality and timeliness standards	Sets clear performance expectations for team members and holds them accountable for performance	Identifies and tracks key metrics regarding group and individual performance as well as achievement of team goals
C. **Provides others with clear direction and expectations**	Provides direction and helps others to understand expectations	Communicates priorities and provides guidance to others, helping them to understand expectations	Consistently communicates clear priorities and objectives to help others to understand expectations, meet challenging goals, and maximize accountability and productivity
D. **Provides feedback and coaching to others**	Provides performance feedback to others	Provides timely feedback on performance and progress in light of expectations and goals, and coaches others to improve performance	Identifies needs for employee development and provides ongoing, constructive feedback and coaching to others, highlighting performance strengths and areas for improvement

20. Leveraging Technology

Behaviors	Proficiency Levels		
	Level I: Basic	**Level II: Intermediate**	**Level III: Advanced**
A. **Applies technology tools and techniques to gather and store information**	Applies basic technology tools and techniques to uncover new information, and effectively uses existing systems to retrieve and store data	Applies advanced technology tools and techniques as well as multiple sources to uncover new information; effectively uses a broad array of resources to retrieve and store data	Applies advanced technology tools and comprehensive sources and techniques to search for new information and retrieve and store data
B. **Uses technology and visual aids to facilitate and enhance communications**	Effectively uses common communication technologies and prepares basic visual aids to supplement written or verbal explanations	Effectively uses new or advanced communication technologies; uses appropriate communication medium for the audience and situation, and prepares visual aids that clearly communicate information without additional explanation	Effectively uses all available communication technologies, including advanced or novel applications, to enable new modes of sharing information and ideas; consistently chooses appropriate communication medium for the audience and situation, and prepares visual aids that clearly and succinctly communicate complex information without additional explanation
C. **Leverages standard technology and applications to complete work**	Has a basic knowledge of standard technology and applications, and uses these tools to perform work with minimal guidance	Has a broad knowledge of standard technology and applications and requires no guidance in using these tools	Has a comprehensive knowledge of standard technology and applications; is seen by others as an expert in their application and identifies new applications for enhancing own and others' productivity

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| D. Applies profession-specific or other specialized applications to complete work | Has a basic knowledge of relevant profession-specific or specialized applications and can use these tools to perform work with occasional guidance | Has a thorough knowledge of most relevant profession-specific or specialized applications and can use these tools to perform work with minimal guidance | Has a comprehensive knowledge of all relevant profession-specific or specialized applications; requires no guidance in using these tools and is seen by others as an expert in their application |
| E. Stays up-to-date on technological changes | Stays current on relevant technological changes that are needed on the job | Seeks out new and improved technologies to apply to present and future work | Anticipates future needs and identifies emerging tools, technologies, and methodologies that may assist with meeting work goals; develops or introduces new information technology applications to the organization |

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