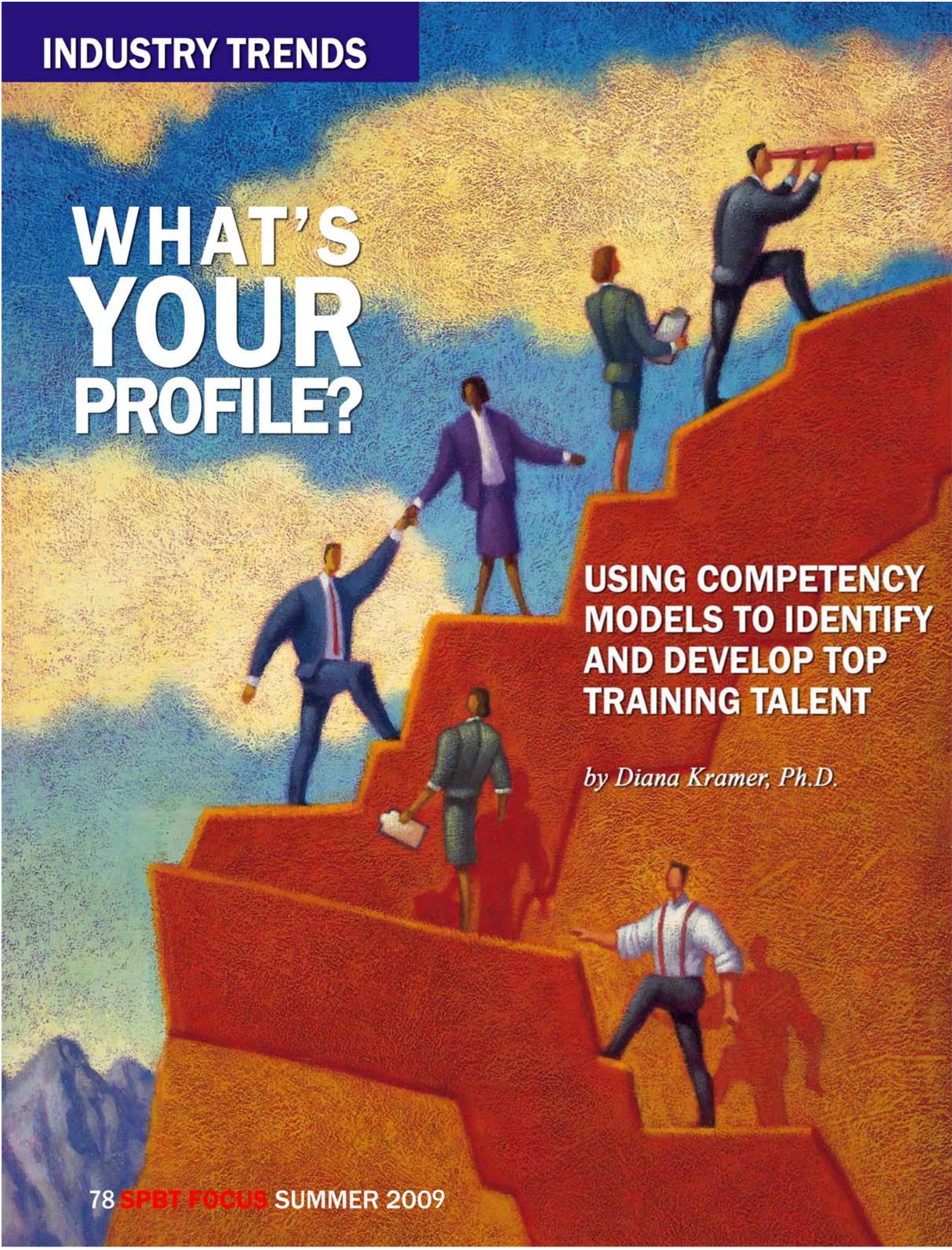


**INDUSTRY TRENDS**

# WHAT'S YOUR PROFILE?

**USING COMPETENCY  
MODELS TO IDENTIFY  
AND DEVELOP TOP  
TRAINING TALENT**

*by Diana Kramer, Ph.D.*



**W**hat differentiates the BEST from the REST? How do we define exceptional performance? Competencies provide an objective platform of skills, knowledge, and behaviors that identify what is required for success in a company, job, or function.

Kramer Consulting Solutions, Inc. partnered with a major pharmaceutical company on a comprehensive competency project to identify what is required for successful performance for all the positions within the Training and Development Department. There were several business reasons for this competency effort.

The competitive environment of the company was becoming more challenging. The Training Department had to evaluate its mission to determine its future direction. The expected outcomes for the competency models included a clear description of what was required for successful performance, not only for today, but to guide all training employees toward the future. Training and Development had to develop new performance standards to meet the needs of the evolving business model.

The department wanted to ensure more accurate assessments by describing performance in objective terms. Competency models would provide validated information to enhance the development process and facilitate the selection of top training and development candidates in recruiting and talent management. Competency models align the support structure of the organization with defined expectations for performance.

## Competency Models

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Eight competency models were created for each position within the training organization. These were:

- Executive Director
- Director of Management Development
- Director of Training
- Manager Management Development
- Manager Training
- Manager Services
- Associate Training Manager
- Training Coordinator

The resulting competencies for the positions included:

- Business Knowledge
- Coaching Others
- Communications
- Leadership
- Management Development
- Collaboration
- Planning
- Problem Solving
- Product and Market Knowledge
- Training Delivery
- Training Design and Development

The positions have a range of seven-ten competencies each. Each competency has a unique behavioral definition, descriptive factors, and three stages of development as follows:

**Factors:** Describe the component behaviors of each competency. Each competency contains approximately three-five factors. This provides for more specific evaluation of each competency, thus enabling the targeting of very specific strengths and developmental areas.

**Developmental Stages:** Describe performance for each competency along a continuum of basic to excellent. Examples for each competency can be grouped into

the stages to allow individuals to better realize their strengths and gaps (Figure 1).

**Stage One: Acquiring/Contributing:** Behaviors in this stage reflect expected performance in the job by the end of six months.

**Stage Two: Fully Functioning:** Behaviors in this stage reflect performance that is sound, acceptable, and meets standards.

**Stage Three: Expert/Leading:** Behaviors in this stage reflect performance that goes beyond expectations. These individuals demonstrate excellence in the specific areas.

## Competency Process

The process of creating the competency models consisted of a series of interviews, focus groups, and thorough analyses of behaviors, knowledge, and skills. The process is depicted below:

**Competencies provide an objective platform of skills, knowledge and behaviors that identify what is required for success in a company, job, or function.**

**Phase One:** The business environment was thoroughly analyzed to provide a foundation and context for the competency project. This information was validated with the interviews with senior management.

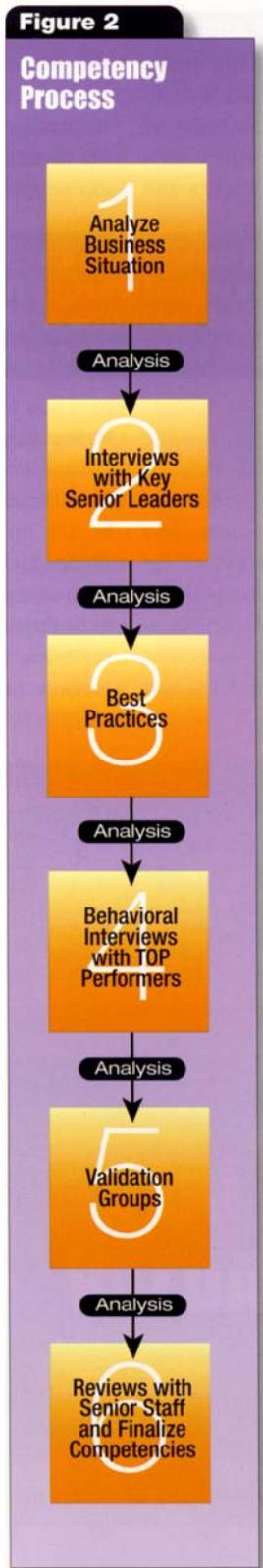
**Figure 1**

Sample Competency			
<b>Training Design and Development - Training Manager Position</b>			
<i>Uses needs analyses and adult learning principles effectively to develop and design appropriate training and development solutions.</i>			
Factors	Stage I (Acquiring/Contributing)	Stage II (Fully Functional)	Stage III (Expert/Leading)
Needs Analysis	Demonstrates an understanding of the principles of conducting a needs analysis; participates in needs analyses studies	Effectively plans and conducts a needs analyses, interprets data and makes appropriate recommendations; validates information with stakeholders	Anticipates long-term training needs and designs appropriate studies to collect and analyze data; makes strategic recommendations
Adult Learning Principles	Demonstrates an understanding of and uses adult learning principles to design elements of programs	Consistently uses adult learning principles effectively to design and develop training programs and materials; coaches peers and partners on adult learning	Develops new and innovative curriculum and programs that incorporate principles of adult learning
Measurement	Demonstrates an understanding of the value of training evaluation; uses existing measurement tools to assess program effectiveness	Uses appropriate evaluation tools to enhance existing programs and to recommend new solutions and curriculum	Develops and implements new training evaluation processes to improve measurement effectiveness
Resources	Demonstrates an understanding of different resources and their usage; analyzes training needs and recommends allocations	Uses a wide variety of training resources effectively to support training design and development solutions	Identifies new and innovative ways to use existing resources; leverages resources across the company to maximize efficiencies

**Phase Two:** Interviews were conducted with senior executives to obtain the long-term view of the Training and Development organization of the future. The strategic direction of the department was discussed. Ongoing and/or anticipated changes in the business and the implications of these changes for Training and Development were analyzed. The necessary competencies to support the organization toward achieving the vision of the future were discussed.

**Phase Three:** Analyses of other competency models and best practices information was researched and evaluated. This provided an external validation benchmark for the study.

**Phase Four:** Behavioral interviews were also conducted with top performers. Examples of exceptional performance for each job were gathered and analyzed. Themes emerged and were interpreted to construct the initial competency models. Factors and stages for each competency were initially defined.



**Phase Five:** Focus group meetings were conducted to discuss each of the eight positions. Focus groups provided additional input into the specific behaviors, knowledge, and skills to develop the competencies. This also facilitated lively debate among participants in order to create ownership and commitment to the process. Data from the focus groups and interviews were analyzed and the job competencies for each of the positions were further developed.

**Phase Six:** Interview and focus group participants met again to test, refine, and validate the specific competencies. Human Resource reviewed all the competency models to ensure that they met the company standards for each position. Senior management ultimately approved all competency models to ensure that they reflected the desired state of each position.

## Leadership Profile

The corporate office has a Strategic Leadership Profile (SLP) which is a listing of competencies that are required for all individuals across the company, regardless of job, level, and location. The SLP provides a strategic framework and common language for all employees.

On the other hand, the training and development job competencies are very specific to each position. They provide a detailed description of the skills, knowledge, and behaviors required for success for each job.

An important part of this project was to analyze each job competency and map each one to the Strategic Leadership Profile competencies. This serves

to operationalize the SLP for the specific jobs while having it become more meaningful to individual employees.

## Competency Applications

**Assessment:** (Figure 3) Evaluating employee performance on each of the competencies facilitates a more objective feedback process between managers and employees. Employees understand in specific terms the strengths and development areas to more easily target developmental activities. The assessment process includes separate evaluation by the manager and employee and then a joint meeting to discuss examples and clarify understanding.

**Developing People:** Using competencies as the foundation for development plans enables employees and their managers

to target specific strengths and developmental areas. A customized Resource Guide is an integral part of the developmental process and includes a wide variety of activities for self-improvement on each competency. Activities include: on-the-job activities,

**A customized resource guide is an integral part of the developmental process and includes a wide variety of activities for self-improvement on each competency.**

readings, websites, audio-cassettes, internal and external training, CDs, and videos. Resources are current and reflect only the past few years. Each resource is evaluated to ensure it reflects the contents of each competency and to ensure quality.

## Partial Competency Assessment Tool

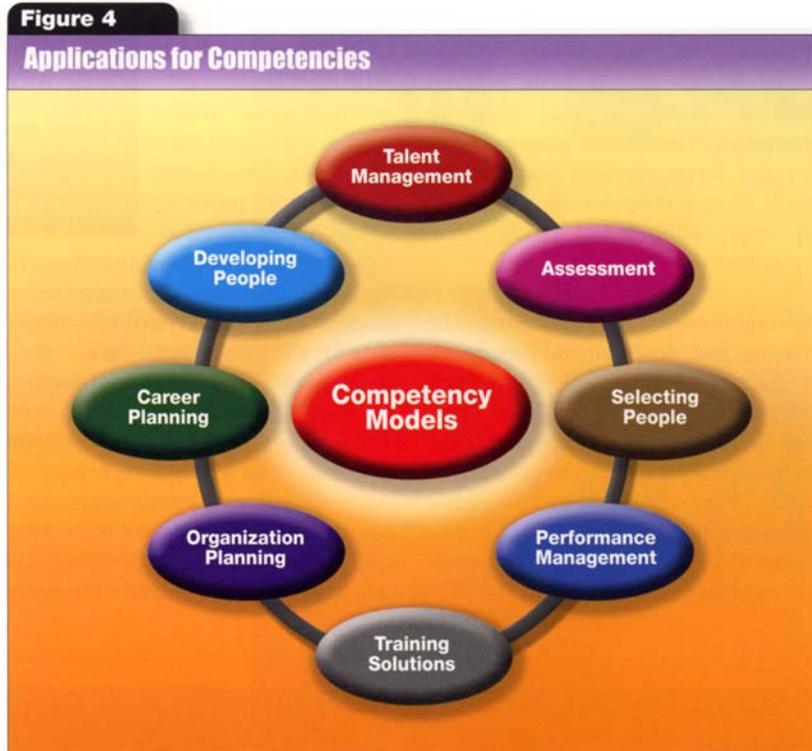
		Self					Manager				
		N	0	1	2	3	N	0	1	2	3
<b>Figure 3</b>											
<b>Training Design &amp; Development</b>	<b>Factors</b>										
Uses needs analyses and adult learning principles effectively to develop and design appropriate training and development solutions.	1. Needs Analysis	<input type="checkbox"/>									
	2. Adult Learning Principles	<input type="checkbox"/>									
	3. Measurement	<input type="checkbox"/>									
	4. Resources	<input type="checkbox"/>									
Comments:											
<b>Training Delivery</b>	<b>Factors</b>										
Manages all aspects of the training delivery process, delivers and facilitates effective programs based on customer needs.	1. Training Environment	<input type="checkbox"/>									
	2. Platform Skills	<input type="checkbox"/>									
	3. Logistics	<input type="checkbox"/>									
Comments:											
<b>Business Acumen</b>	<b>Factors</b>										
Effectively integrates knowledge of products, markets, and the business into all aspects of training programs.	1. Sales & Marketing Direction	<input type="checkbox"/>									
	2. Product Knowledge	<input type="checkbox"/>									
	3. Business Plan	<input type="checkbox"/>									
Comments:											

### Selecting Top Performers:

Using competencies facilitates the identification of the best candidates to fill open positions. The Interview Guide includes custom questions for each competency to ensure consistency in evaluating a variety of candidates. The Interview Guide includes the following sections: Pre-Interview Checklist, Opening the Interview, Work History, Note-Taking Area, Closing the Interview, and Summary Ratings on the competencies.

### Sample Questions for One Competency Training Design and Development (Manager):

- Describe a training program that you developed. What was the program? What was your role in the development? How did the program turn out?
- Tell me about a time when you made a modification to an existing training offering. What was the modification? What specific steps did you take? What was the result?
- How do you apply the principles of instructional design into your work? Tell me about a particular application. What was the result?
- Tell me about the best training program that you have developed. What were the specific circumstances? What was your contribution? How was the program used?



**Planning Careers:** Using competencies in career planning includes performance indicators that provide observable behaviors for each job in the department and throughout the company. Employees can readily see the differences among jobs and target opportunities depending upon their interests and abilities.

**Talent Management:** Using competencies as the basis for this process facilitates the objective evaluation of succession planning talent for the future. Comparisons can be made on agreed upon validated criteria to target staffing and development opportunities.

**Management Development:** The training and development department is based on rotational assignments between

**Training and development job competencies are very specific to each position. They provide a detailed description of the skills, knowledge, and behaviors required for success for each job.**

the field and the home office. Top field personnel enter and leave as competencies and career interests evolve. Many individuals in training and development also focus on the field competency models in their development planning activities.

## Launch Workshop

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An interactive workshop is the vehicle that was used to launch the competency process. The workshop provided individuals with an interactive forum to begin experiencing the competency models. There were exercises where individuals discussed how they could apply the competency models specifically to their jobs.

Role plays were used to provide individuals with a simulation to practice the manager-employee assessment discussion. Exercises helped individuals understand how to more effectively use the Resource Guide to guide developmental activities. In addition, the competency workshop became a team building process. Similarities and differences among the jobs are explored to further enhance the career planning process.

## Next Steps

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After the competency launch, all individuals began participation in the competency assessment process. Each was asked to evaluate and update their development plans using the competency models as a foundation.

To ensure implementation success, the competency models will continue to be integrated into all Human Resources systems. This will facilitate a meaningful development planning process and ensure management development meets the needs of training, development, and sales.



Diana Kramer is President of Kramer Consulting Solutions, Inc., a firm that consults extensively on designing and implementing all types of competency models, including leadership, core, job, and functional formats.

Applications are specifically developed to integrate the competency models into the business. Applications include leadership and professional development, succession planning, performance management, interviewing, assessment, coaching, and training. Diana's clients include numerous Fortune 500 corporations.

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*Please contact Diana at (908) 696-1776 or [Diana.kramer@kramerconsulting.net](mailto:Diana.kramer@kramerconsulting.net) or visit [www.kramerconsulting.net](http://www.kramerconsulting.net)*