

Validating the Global Competency Model

Engagement Profile: Competency Modeling



Background

IBM is a Fortune 25 global company that employs more than 425,000 people worldwide. Jobs within IBM are grouped into 21 categories that cut across geographic locations and business units.

Catalyst

IBM is facing the challenge of an increasingly global marketplace for its products and services, along with numerous changes in the ways the company does business, including, but not limited to, more employees working remotely and an ever-increasing rate of technological change.

Challenge

The primary goal of this project was to develop and validate a model of the core competencies that are critically important for successful performance in IBM professional jobs worldwide. A secondary goal of this project was to create a competency model that could be used as a meaningful framework for the monumental amount of training and developmental material that already existed within IBM but didn't have a unifying model within which to organize it and make it easily accessible to employees.

Solution

The first step in this project involved defining a set of global competencies. PDRI, a CEB Company, conducted focus groups and phone interviews with IBM incumbents and managers in Bands 6-10 in eight countries, asking about the critical skills and abilities needed to succeed at IBM, both now and in the future. Participants were also asked to generate sample work behaviors that illustrate highly effective performance in each of the competencies they identified as critically important.

The information was analyzed and used to define a draft competency model. After several iterative review and revision steps, the competency model, together with the work behaviors illustrating successful performance for each competency, was included in a job analysis survey.

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The primary rating was targeted toward how important each competency/behavior is for successful performance at IBM. The survey was sent to nearly 48,000 incumbents and managers worldwide via IBM's intranet, and more than 26,000 completed the surveys—a 56% response rate.

Competency and work behavior data were analyzed both across and within band level, job category and geography. Results were discussed with key stakeholders within IBM, and a final competency model was defined. Critically important parts of this project were the identification of key stakeholders for this competency model and the development of a communication and implementation plan that involved obtaining information from them early in the project and maintaining their support throughout the project.

Outcomes

When the competency model developed for Bands 6–10 was presented to IBM senior management, they decided to implement the model for Bands 1–5 as well. Additional work was completed to ensure the relevance and validity of the competency model for these bands, including appropriate revisions to the model. There were 12 primary job categories involved in the project, as well as 9 IT subcategories, across 18 country clusters.

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