



## Building Continuous Improvement into Jobs

All jobs involve competencies, which are the skills or abilities required within each particular job. A competency model includes four types of competency groupings for job content:

- 1. Organization wide (Level 1)** — This refers to the skills or abilities needed from the majority of people within the organization. These would be prevalent in common work and something to strive for with all employees.
- 2. Anyone in a leadership or management role (Level 2)**—Leadership competencies create a standard for managers in terms of their leadership roles. Most of the organizational competencies require managers to support those skills by managing in a manner that supports those behaviors.
- 3. By function (Level 3)**—These competencies would be different for various functions, such as operations, accounting, human resources, quality assurance, and information systems. The functional competencies link to the organizational competencies, but they have different standards required for the skills or specific applications that are relevant only to that department.
- 4. By position for job-specific detail (Level 4)**—These competencies will also be linked to the other competencies, but they will be set at a level appropriate for the precise job and may be tailored to particular needs.

A Lean HR competency model takes this traditional competency approach and ensures the needs of a continuous improvement culture with the desired results being threaded into all jobs. This ensures that the desire to create a particular environment goes into a specific type of plan to build these skills into the jobs on a long-term basis.

Although changing job content can take a significant amount of time, the results will also be relatively long lasting.

The following Lean HR Competency Model takes a traditional competency approach and ensures each aspect of an improvement-oriented culture is threaded into each job role.

The model begins with the organizational competencies (Level 1), which are those that are required for all jobs. The competencies would then be universal across the organization. This chapter presents specific continuous improvement competencies, but you can customize them to fit the particular needs of your organization. The Lean HR Competency Model, or a customized model of your choice, creates your intended workplace based upon a plan that builds the needed skills and required behaviors into the jobs on a long-term basis. Establishing the Level 1 competencies for your organization will be the largest part of your Lean HR implementation, but it is often not the place organizations will begin to put lean requirements into job content. Also, to be clear, Level 1 does not refer to working on all non-managerial roles, but usually begins with a few key roles that are held by relatively large groups of people to implement cultural objectives.

More often, organizations begin with establishing lean leadership competencies in Level 2. Department specific competencies are built into jobs as needed changes are identified that support that department in adding more value in terms of meeting customer needs and optimizing their processes. Upon completion of your model, there will be a design for the gold standards of each and every job role, the Level 4 job competencies. Some competencies might be picked up in Level 4 that are specific to only one job and this is where those details are registered.

For example, I recently visited an organization that wanted everyone to be involved in having the skills to providing and implementing employee suggestions for improvement, which is an example of a Level 1 competency. The managers, or Lean leaders, were required to supervise the suggestion process, which included implementing ideas and coaching others to support the implementation of ideas, which is a Level 2 competency.

The HR department had to build skills in the area of training managers and employees in their roles of the suggestion process, which would be a Level 3 competency. Lastly, there was one person who had the specific role to communicate for all stakeholders the full range of employee suggestions and their implementations in a manner that drove increasing amounts of them, which would be a Level 4 job specific competency. Understanding the competencies described will become the basis for documenting these requirements as shown in resources related to develop job roles by designing job matrices.



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