

## **DETERMINING COMPETENCIES FOR HIRING** **EXERCISE**

In this exercise, you will identify crucial competencies for a given position. If you are currently hiring or may soon be hiring, use the job posting to help you define the competencies. If you are not currently hiring, use a specific position for this exercise that you are very familiar with (even your own will do). Enter the title of the position on the first line of the following page.

Now, using the competency cards, sort the cards into three piles. Pile one, clearly not essential for this position. Pile two, nice to have, but not absolutely essential for this position. Pile three, critical skills for success in this position. Narrow down pile three until you have no more than *8 competencies* that you personally feel are *most important* for success in this position. Why only eight? Although more competencies may be desirable in a given position, for interviewing and the time constraints involved, eight is about the highest number of competencies that can be successfully probed. However, feel free to play with the number of competencies to determine a reasonable number of essential competencies for your positions.

Note that *essential* competencies are those that, if the employee failed to have or did poorly in that area, would definitely lead to termination. It is important to distinguish essential competencies that *really matter* from those that are simply desirable. Desirable competencies are those that if possessed would lead to improved performance, but if not possessed would probably not lead to termination. Think about stars you have known in this position; think about the most vital functions of the job, and those "issues" which have cropped up in the past, to guide your decision making.

Once you have completed your sorting of the cards, write in the names of up to eight *essential* competencies on the following page. Try to leave space for your interview questions on the page as well.

# *What Really Matters...*

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**Position Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Job Requirement 1:**

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**Job Requirement 2:**

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**Job Requirement 3:**

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**Job Requirement 4:**

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**Job Requirement 5:**

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**Job Requirement 6:**

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**Job Requirement 7:**

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**Job Requirement 8:**

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## *What Really Matters...*

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Once you have entered the competencies on the lines, your goal will be to create questions for candidates that will determine if they have the skills, abilities, knowledge or aptitude to perform that competency well.

Use behavioral questions to determine:

- if they have work-related experience with the competency
- the level of their skill, ability or competence
- their feeling or attitude toward the competency

Keep in mind that studies indicate that the past performance of an employee is the best indicator of the future performance. Therefore your questions should, when possible, probe the candidate's past performance and behavior.

Also consider the fact that most people will have *some* level of ability or skill with most competencies. The real challenge is to identify the level of ability you desire. As you craft your questions, think about the answers you would like to hear (again, thinking of the "star" performer). What would indicate a "meeting expectations" response or an "exceeds expectations" response?

Now write a question for each competency on the preceding page. If you need additional space use the back of the sheet.

In your next live interview, or in a practice interview, incorporate these questions and see the difference in the quality of the information you gather from the candidates. Note that some of your questions may need to be tweaked or even replaced if they do not bring out the depth of ability or type of competency information you are seeking. That's okay. The goal is to, over time, be asking the right questions, leading to much better hiring decisions.