

# What Employers Want!

## Baseline Competencies Every Employee Needs to Have<sup>1</sup>

### PERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS COMPETENCIES

#### Interpersonal Skills

- *Demonstrating sensitivity/empathy* – Shows sincere interest in others and their concerns, and demonstrates sensitivity to the needs and feelings of others; helps others resolve sensitive interpersonal problems as appropriate; looks for ways to help people, and pitches in to help others.
- *Demonstrating insight into behavior* – Recognizes and accurately interprets the verbal and nonverbal behavior of others; shows insight into the actions and motives of others, and recognizes when relationships with others are strained.
- *Maintaining open relationships* – Maintains open lines of communication with others; encourages others to approach them with problems and successes; establishes a high degree of trust and credibility with others.
- *Respecting diversity* – Demonstrates sensitivity and respect for the opinions, perspectives, customs and individual differences of others; promotes and strives to create a workforce and environment that represents and values diversity of people and ideas.
- *Working with diverse people* – Is flexible and open-minded when dealing with a wide range of people; listens to and considers others' viewpoints and alters opinion when it is appropriate to do so; works well and develops effective relationships with highly diverse personalities.
- *Learning about other cultures* – Takes action to learn about and understand the climate, orientation, needs, and values of other groups, organizations, or cultures; willingly adjusts behavior or appearance as necessary to show respect for others' values and customs.

#### Integrity

- *Behaving ethically* – Abides by a strict code of ethics and behavior; chooses an ethical course of action and does the right thing, even in the face of opposition; encourages others to behave accordingly.
- *Acting fairly* – Treats others with honesty, fairness and respect; makes decisions that are objective and reflect the just treatment of others.
- *Taking responsibility* – Takes responsibility for accomplishing work goals within accepted timeframes; accepts responsibility for one's decisions and actions and for those of one's group, team, or department; attempts to learn from mistakes.

#### Professionalism

- *Demonstrating self-control* – Demonstrates self-control by maintaining composure and keeping emotions in check even in very difficult situations; deals calmly and effectively with stressful situations.
- *Professional appearance* – Maintains a professional demeanor; dresses appropriately for occupation and its requirements; maintains appropriate personal hygiene;
- *Substance abuse* – is free from substance abuse.

- *Maintains a positive attitude* – Projects a professional image of oneself and the organization; demonstrates a positive attitude towards work; takes pride in one's work and the work of the organization.

### **Initiative**

- *Persisting* – Pursues work with energy, drive, and a strong accomplishment orientation; persists and expends extra effort to accomplish tasks even when conditions are difficult or deadlines are tight; persists at a task or problem despite interruptions, obstacles, or setbacks.
- *Taking initiative* – Goes beyond the routine demands of the job; takes initiative in seeking out new work challenges and increasing the variety and scope of one's job; seeks opportunities to influence events and originate action; assists others who have less experience or have heavy workloads.
- *Setting challenging goals* – Establishes and maintains personally challenging but realistic work goals; exerts effort toward task mastery; brings issues to closure by pushing forward until a resolution is achieved.
- *Working independently* – Develops own ways of doing things; is able to perform effectively even with minimal direction, support or approval and without direct supervision.
- *Achievement motivation* – Intrinsically driven to succeed and excel; strives to exceed standards and expectations; exhibits confidence in capabilities and an expectation to succeed in future activities.

### **Dependability & Reliability**

- *Fulfilling obligations* – Behaves consistently and predictably; is reliable, responsible and dependable in fulfilling obligations; diligently follows through on commitments and consistently meets deadlines.
- *Showing up on time* – Demonstrates regular and punctual attendance; rarely is late for meetings or appointments.
- *Attending to details* – Diligently checks work to ensure that all essential details have been considered; notices errors or inconsistencies that others have missed, and takes prompt, thorough action to correct errors.
- *Complying with policies* – Follows written and verbal directions; complies with organizational rules, policies and procedures.

### **Willingness to Learn**

- *Demonstrating an interest in learning* – Demonstrates an interest in personal learning and development; seeks feedback from multiple sources about how to improve and develop, and modifies behavior based on feedback or self-analysis of past mistakes.
- *Participating in training* – Takes steps to develop and maintain knowledge, skills, and expertise necessary to achieve positive results; participates fully in relevant training programs and actively pursues other opportunities to develop knowledge and skills.
- *Anticipating changes in work* – Anticipates changes in work demands and searches for and participates in assignments or training that address these changing demands; treats unexpected circumstances as opportunities to learn.
- *Identifying career interests* – Takes charge of personal career development by identifying occupational interests, strengths, options and opportunities; makes insightful career planning decisions based on integration and consideration of others' feedback, and seeks out additional training to pursue career goals.

## ACADEMIC COMPETENCIES

### Reading

- *Comprehension* – Locates, understands, and interprets written information in prose and in documents such as manuals, reports, memos, letters, forms, graphs, charts, tables, calendars, schedules, signs, notices, applications and directions; understands the purpose of written materials; attains meaning and comprehends core ideas.
- *Attention to detail* – Identifies main ideas; notes details and facts; detects inconsistencies; identifies implied meaning and details; identifies missing information; identifies trends.
- *Integration* – Critically evaluates and analyzes information in written materials; integrates and synthesizes information from multiple written materials.
- *Application* – Integrates what is learned from written materials with prior knowledge; applies what is learned from written material to follow instructions and complete specific tasks; applies what is learned from written material to future situations.

### Writing

- *Organization and development* – Creates documents such as letters, directions, manuals, reports, graphs, and flow charts; communicates thoughts, ideas, information, messages and other written information, which may contain technical material, in a logical, organized and coherent manner; ideas are well developed with supporting information and examples.
- *Mechanics* – Uses standard syntax and sentence structure; uses correct spelling, punctuation, and capitalization; uses appropriate grammar (e.g., correct tense, subject-verb agreement, no missing words).
- *Tone* – Writes in a manner appropriate for business; uses language appropriate for the target audience; uses appropriate tone and word choice (e.g., writing is professional and courteous).

### Mathematics

- *Quantification* – Reads and writes numbers; counts and places numbers in sequence; recognizes whether one number is larger than another.
- *Computation* – Adds, subtracts, multiplies, and divides with whole numbers, fractions, decimals, and percents; calculates averages, ratios, proportions and rates; converts decimals to fractions; converts fractions to percents.
- *Measurement and estimation* – Takes measurements of time, temperature, distances, length, width, height, perimeter, area, volume, weight, velocity, and speed; uses and reports measurements correctly; converts from one measurement to another (e.g., from English to metric).
- *Application* – Performs basic math computations accurately; translates practical problems into useful mathematical expressions and uses appropriate mathematical formulas and techniques.

### Science & Technology

- *Comprehension* – Understands basic scientific principles and to use commonly available technology; understands the scientific method (i.e., identifies problems, collects information, forms opinions and draws conclusions); understands overall intent and proper procedures for set-up and operation of equipment.

- *Application* – Applies basic scientific principles and technology to complete tasks.

### **Communication – Listening & Speaking**

- *Speaking* – Expresses information to individuals or groups taking into account the audience and the nature of the information (e.g., technical or controversial); speaks clearly and confidently; information is organized in a logical manner; speaks using common English conventions including proper grammar, tone and pace; tracks audience responses and reacts appropriately to those responses; effectively uses eye contact and non-verbal expression.
- *Listening* – Receives, attends to, interprets, understands, and responds to verbal messages and other cues; picks out important information in verbal messages; understands complex instructions; appreciates feelings and concerns of verbal messages.
- *Two-way communication* – Practices meaningful two-way communication (i.e., speaks clearly, pays close attention and seeks to understand others, listens attentively and clarifies information); attends to nonverbal cues and responds appropriately.
- *Persuasion/Influence* – Influences others; persuasively presents thoughts and ideas; gains commitment and ensures support for proposed ideas.

### **Critical & Analytic Thinking**

- *Reasoning* – Possesses sufficient inductive and deductive reasoning ability to perform job successfully; critically reviews, analyzes, synthesizes, compares and interprets information; draws conclusions from relevant and/or missing information; understands the principles underlying the relationship among facts and applies this understanding when solving problems.
- *Mental agility* – Identifies connections between issues; quickly understands, orients to, and learns new assignments; shifts gears and changes direction when working on multiple projects or issues. [is this part of critical thinking]

### **Active Learning**

- *Learning strategies* – Applies a range of learning techniques to acquire new knowledge and skills; processes and retains information; identifies when it is necessary to acquire new knowledge and skills.
- *Application* – Integrates newly learned knowledge and skills with existing knowledge and skills; uses newly learned knowledge and skills to complete specific tasks; uses newly learned knowledge and skills in new or unfamiliar situations.

### **Basic Computer Skills**

- *Comprehending the basics* – Understands and efficiently uses basic computer hardware (e.g. PCs, printers) and software (e.g. word processing software, spreadsheet software) to perform tasks; understands common computer terminology (e.g., program, operating system) and is familiar with the fundamental capabilities of computers.
- *Entering data* – Enters data into computer files quickly, with an acceptable degree of accuracy; double checks data entry carefully; notices when data are missing or look wrong and takes steps to ensure computer files are complete and accurate.
- *Preparing documents* – Uses word processing programs to create, edit, and retrieve document files; types materials quickly and accurately; checks work carefully and identifies/corrects typographical errors; uses basic reference materials and tools (e.g., spell check) to ensure accuracy.

## WORKPLACE COMPETENCIES

### Teamwork

- *Acknowledging team membership and role* – Accepts membership in the team; shows loyalty to the team; determines when to be a leader and when to be a follower depending on what is needed to achieve the team's goals and objectives; encourages others to express their ideas and opinions; identifies and draws upon team members' strengths and weaknesses to achieve results; learns from other team members.
- *Establishing productive relationships* – Develops constructive and cooperative working relationships with others; exhibits tact and diplomacy and strives to build consensus; shows sensitivity to the thoughts and opinions of other team members; delivers constructive criticism and voices objections to others' ideas and opinions in a supportive, non-accusatory manner; responds appropriately to positive and negative feedback.
- *Identifying with the team and its goals* – Identifies the goals, norms, values, and customs of the team; is a team player and contributes to the group's effort; uses a group approach to identify problems and develop solutions based on group consensus; effectively communicates with all members of the group or team to achieve team goals and objectives.
- *Resolving conflicts* – Brings others together to reconcile differences; handles conflicts maturely by exercising "give and take" to achieve positive results for all parties; reaches formal or informal agreements that promote mutual goals and interests, and obtains commitment to those agreements from individuals or groups.

### Adaptability & Flexibility

- *Employing unique analyses* – Employs unique analyses and generates new, innovative ideas in complex areas; integrates seemingly unrelated information to develop creative solutions; develops innovative methods of obtaining or using resources when insufficient resources are available.
- *Entertaining new ideas* – Is open to considering new ways of doing things; actively seeks out and carefully considers the merits of new approaches to work; willingly embraces new approaches when appropriate and discards approaches that are no longer working.
- *Dealing with ambiguity* – Takes effective action when necessary without having to have all the necessary facts in hand; easily changes gears in response to unpredictable or unexpected events, pressures, situations and job demands; effectively changes plans, goals, actions or priorities to deal with changing situations.

### Customer Focus

- *Understanding customer needs* – Demonstrates a desire to understand customer needs; listens to what customers are saying and asks questions as appropriate; demonstrates awareness of client goals.
- *Providing personalized service* – Provides prompt, efficient and personalized assistance to meet the requirements, requests, and concerns of customers; provides thorough, accurate information to answer customers' questions and inform them of commitment times or performance guarantees; actively looks for ways to help customers by identifying and proposing appropriate solutions and/or services; establishes boundaries as appropriate for unreasonable customer demands.
- *Acting professionally* – Is pleasant, courteous and professional when dealing with internal or external customers; develops constructive and cooperative working relationships with customers, and displays a good-natured, cooperative attitude; is calm and empathetic when dealing with hostile customers.

- *Keeping customers informed* – Follows up with customers during projects and following project completion; keeps clients up to date about decisions that affect them; seeks the comments, criticisms and involvement of customers; adjusts services based on customer feedback.

### **Planning & Organizing**

- *Planning* – Approaches work in a methodical manner; plans and schedules tasks so that work is completed on time; keeps track of details to ensure work is performed accurately and completely.
- *Prioritizing* – Prioritizes various competing tasks and performs them quickly and efficiently according to their urgency; finds new ways of organizing work area or planning work to accomplish work more efficiently.
- *Allocating resources* – Estimates resources needed for project completion; allocates time and resources effectively and coordinates efforts with all affected parties; keeps all parties informed of progress and all relevant changes to project timelines.
- *Anticipating obstacles* – Anticipates obstacles to project completion and develops contingency plans to address them; takes necessary corrective action when projects go off-track.

### **Creative Thinking**

- *Generating innovative solutions* – Uses information, knowledge, and beliefs to generate original, innovative solutions to problems; reframes problems in a different light to find fresh approaches; entertains wide-ranging possibilities others may miss; takes advantage of difficult or unusual situations to develop unique approaches and useful solutions.
- *Seeing the big picture* – Has broad knowledge and perspective; pieces together seemingly unrelated data to identify patterns and trends and to see a bigger picture; understands the pieces of a system as a whole and appreciates the consequences of actions on other parts of the system; possesses a big-picture view of the situation.

### **Problem Solving & Decision-Making**

- *Identifying the problem* – Anticipates or recognizes the existence of a problem; identifies the true nature of the problem by analyzing its component parts; uses all available reference systems to locate and obtain information relevant to the problem; recalls previously learned information that is relevant to the problem.
- *Locating, gathering, and organizing relevant information* – Effectively uses both internal resources (e.g., internal computer networks, company filing systems) and external resources (e.g., internet search engines) to locate and gather information; examines information obtained for relevance and completeness; recognizes important gaps in existing information and takes steps to eliminate those gaps; organizes/reorganizes information as appropriate to gain a better understanding of the problem.
- *Generating alternatives* – Integrates previously learned and externally obtained information to generate a variety of high-quality alternative approaches to the problem; skillfully uses logic and analysis to identify the strengths and weaknesses, the costs and benefits, and the short- and long-term consequences of different approaches.
- *Choosing a solution* – Decisively chooses the best solution after contemplating available approaches to the problem; makes difficult decisions even in highly ambiguous or ill-defined situations; quickly chooses an effective solution without assistance when appropriate.
- *Implementing the solution* – Commits to a solution in a timely manner, and develops a realistic approach for implementing the chosen solution; observes and evaluates the outcomes of

implementing the solution to assess the need for alternative approaches and to identify lessons learned.

### **Working with Tools & Technology**

- *Selecting tools* – Selects and applies appropriate tools or technological solutions to frequently encountered problems; carefully considers which tools or technological solutions are appropriate for a given job, and consistently chooses the best tool or technological solution for the problem at hand.
- *Keeping current* – Demonstrates an interest in learning about new and emerging tools and technologies; seeks out opportunities to improve knowledge of tools and technologies that may assist in streamlining work and improving productivity.
- *Troubleshooting* – Learns how to maintain and troubleshoot tools and technologies.

### **Workplace Computer Applications**

- *Keyboarding and word processing* – Skillfully uses word-processing software; streamlines document processing by employing a variety of common software functions; uses correct style and format, even when confronted by uncommon requirements that deviate from standard guides; consults appropriate manuals when uncertain about the correct style and format.
- *Internet applications* – Effectively uses the internet and web-based tools to manage basic workplace tasks (e.g., timekeeping, maintaining employee records, conducting information searches); understands and performs internet functions requiring the use of log-in and password information; is aware of company guidelines surrounding internet usage and complies with those guidelines.
- *E-mailing* – Composes professional e-mails to communicate business-related information to coworkers, colleagues, and customers; understands the company e-mail system and its basic functions (e.g., replying to/forwarding messages, using electronic address books, attaching files); ensures that key stakeholders are kept informed of communications by copying (i.e., “CCing”) them on important e-mails when appropriate.
- *Spreadsheets* – Uses spreadsheet software to enter, manipulate, edit and format text and numerical data; effectively creates and saves worksheets, charts, and graphs that are well organized, attractive, and useful.

### **Scheduling and Coordinating**

- *Arranging* – Makes arrangements (e.g. for traveling, meetings) that fulfill all requirements as efficiently and economically as possible; handles all aspects of arrangements thoroughly and completely with little or no supervision.
- *Informing* – Responds to the schedules of others affected by arrangements; informs others of arrangements, giving them complete, accurate and timely information; insures that others receive needed materials in time.
- *Verifying* – Takes steps to verify all arrangements; recognizes problems, generates effective alternatives, and takes corrective action.
- *Coordinating in distributed environments* – Coordinates schedules of colleagues, co-workers, and clients in regional locations (i.e., across time zones) to ensure that inconvenience is minimized and productivity is enhanced; leverages technology (e.g., internet, teleconference) to facilitate information sharing in distributed work environments; takes advantage of team member availability throughout business hours in multiple time zones to enhance productivity.

- *Shiftwork* – Effectively coordinates the transition of employees at the beginning and end of each work shift; disseminates crucial information in an organized manner to rapidly bring employees up to speed at the start of their shifts; ensures that employees are updated on work completed on past shifts and work that still needs to be completed.

### **Checking, Examining & Recording**

- *Detecting errors* – Detects and corrects errors, even under time pressure; notices errors or inconsistencies; forwards or processes forms in a timely and accurate manner.
- *Completing forms* – Selects and completes appropriate forms quickly and completely; attends to and follows through on important information in paperwork; expedites forms, orders or advances that require immediate attention.
- *Obtaining information* – Obtains appropriate information, signatures and approvals promptly; verifies that all information is present and accurate before forwarding materials.
- *Maintaining logs* – Keeps logs, records and files that are up-to-date and readily accessible; updates logs, files and records, noting important changes in status.

### **Business Fundamentals**

- *Situational awareness* – Understands the organization’s mission and functions; recognizes one’s role in the functioning of the company and understands the potential impact one’s own performance can have on the success of the organization; grasps the potential impact of the company’s well-being on employees.
- *Business ethics* – Demonstrates respect for coworkers, colleagues, and customers; acts in the best interest of the company, the community, and the environment; complies with applicable laws and rules governing work and reports loss, waste, or theft or company property to appropriate personnel.
- *Market knowledge* – Understands market trends in the industry and the company’s position in the market; knows who the company’s primary competitors are, and stays current on organizational strategies to maintain competitiveness.

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<sup>1</sup> Competency Model Clearinghouse/Building Blocks Competency Model – Download Model  
[http://www.careeronestop.org/CompetencyModel/pyramid\\_download.aspx](http://www.careeronestop.org/CompetencyModel/pyramid_download.aspx)  
 US Department of Labor – Employment and Training Administration<sup>1</sup>