

# Helping people to achieve

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Competency Models and their use in  
Selection, Assessment and Development



One of Xafinity Skillbase's main aims is to "Maximise Potential" both within an organisation and with individuals. We believe to do this organisations must be able to recognise what behaviours individuals have and measure them against what behaviours the organisation is looking for in specific job roles.

Xafinity Skillbase has over twenty years experience in working with organisations to define objectively what behaviours they are looking for and create a Competency Model. Once this is in place Xafinity Skillbase has the skills, creativity and experience to design, administer, manage and observe Selection, Assessment and Development Centres. The choice and content of the centre depends on the overall objective the organisation is trying to achieve.

We have worked with large organisations to recruit a range of staff levels from sponsored students to MBA graduates. We regularly run development centres to establish the training requirements within an organisation both overall and at the individual level. We have worked with organisations to assess their individuals' behaviour to identify their ability to work in an ever changing environment.

### Competency Models

An area of **expertise** within Xafinity Skillbase is helping clients to create a bespoke competency model. A defined competency model is **vital** and can serve as a basis for selection, promotion, appraisal and development. It helps ensure that all individuals understand what is expected of them, and assists them in taking ownership of their own learning and development. Selecting the right people to meet today's and tomorrow's business needs and developing your workforce to acquire competencies which are needed for future success, are essential for your organisation.

### What is a competency model?

Competencies are **discrete dimensions of behaviour** which are relevant to the role and job performance. Each competency is made up from clustering related behaviours which are themselves derived from an analysis of the job. The level of performance will be affected by how easily and effectively an individual can carry out the necessary behaviours. There are a number of advantages for an organisation to have their own specific competency model. It will encourage involvement and ownership by employees and the style and content of the relevant competency definitions and behaviours will also more accurately reflect the culture of the organisation.

### How do you create a competency model?

A competency model will be created through a rigorous and systematic analysis of the relevant job roles. At Xafinity Skillbase we recommend a multi method approach using a combination of techniques to provide a fully comprehensive picture of the relevant job roles. The typical methods that we use are:

- **Critical Incident Technique**

This technique is designed to collect detailed information from a job incumbent about important or critical incidents with which they have been involved in the past.

- **Repertory Grid**

This is used to make comparisons between a number of job holders. The job holders should be rated on how effective they are in performing the job role. Comparisons

between job holders help elicit those characteristics that are necessary for good performance.

- **Behaviour/Activity Matrix**

A job incumbent will be asked to identify the work activities performed in their role. Using a matrix they will then be asked to identify specific behaviours that are required to perform that activity.

- **Management Perspective**

The input of senior management to augment information from other sources is vital in this process. Structured interviews elicit information about the future requirements of the business and the capabilities which will ensure success.

Combining these methods generates a comprehensive set of competencies which are specific and concrete and incorporate the representative views of those parties who have a valid perspective on the job role.

### When do you use a competency model?

Once agreed and established the competency model and behaviours can be used to shape a number of key activities including:

- Competency-based recruitment (including Selection Centres)
- Performance appraisal
- Development assessment (perhaps via a Development Centre)
- Talent Management and succession planning.

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## Selection, Assessment & Development

The programmes are always designed for specific target audiences and organisations. However, normally any centre will use a multi-method approach to assess each participant's performance. A **multi method approach** means that participants will do a variety of exercises, and during each exercise the participants will be observed by a different observer. The observations and subsequent feedback will be based on competencies and their relevant behaviour cues. In each exercise, the observer will be collecting information on up to three competencies. No feedback will be given by the observers to the participants until the end of the programme.

During the **Integration Session**, which takes place at the end of the centre, the observers will collate all the information they have collected and come to a joint decision on each participant's strengths and suggested development areas. If this is an assessment or development centre **the participants will receive this feedback** from their mentor (one of the observers) as soon as possible after the end of the centre. The feedback will be given to the participant verbally and will be supported by a written summary of their observed performance. The written output will be given to the participant to keep and share with their manager shortly after the programme.

## Exercises

The exercises during this programme are tailored to the activities the participants are involved in at work and the competencies that are being measured. Below is a selection of activities that could be used on a centre:

### A negotiation exercise

A three part exercise involving planning, negotiation and coaching elements;

### A short presentation

A presentation will be prepared and delivered on a topic of general relevance to the client;

### A three-part group exercise

Looking at the participant's capability to identify and put forward reasoned arguments and seeing the results through to the end;

### An assigned leader group exercise

A multi-part exercise in which each group member has an opportunity to lead;

### A problem solving group exercise

The group will be asked to solve a complex problem utilising all group members;

### A written discussion paper

A written exercise addressing some topical issues for the client. The participants then subsequently 'mark' a peers' response and give them feedback;

### A group situational interview

An interview conducted by two observers, where initially one participant has an opportunity to express verbally the actions they might take given a hypothetical business scenario. Then the discussion will be open to all participants. The process will be repeated with each participant taking it in turns to be first to offer their response.

The participants will be measured against the individual behaviour statements in each competency; this enables the feedback and subsequent development areas to be very specific.

## In Summary

The whole programme should be seen by the participants as being:

- About facts and evidence (using examples where possible)
- Balanced and sensitive feedback
- Developmental and not Pass/Fail

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Xafinity Skillbase is a training, development and change consulting company that designs and delivers a broad range of tailored solutions which help maximise individual and organisational potential. Our specialist knowledge and experience lies in development of leadership and management programmes, professional and personal skills, competency assessment and profiling.

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