



Choosing Your Competency Framework:

Ensuring Success with the Right
Content, Tools & Services

HRSG

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Determining Your Needs

If you're reading this guide, you probably already know the basics of competencies¹. You also probably have a challenge within your organization that competencies can help address.

Regardless of the specific challenge that you're looking to address, we have found that there are a few crucial decision points to guide your selection of a solution provider.

Build vs. Buy

For the purposes of this guide, we're assuming that you have made the decision to purchase a competency solution rather than building your own competencies from scratch. But just in case you're still mulling over your options, here's a quick recap on the advantage of using a pre-built framework.

Purchasing a competency framework — *which typically includes a comprehensive competency dictionary and the competency models (or profiles) for jobs* — provides an organization

with content that has been developed and validated by competency professionals, and that can be used “off the shelf” to support your roll out. This approach requires significantly less budget than is required to build competencies from scratch.

At the end of the day, even if your organization is highly unique and specialized, you're pretty likely to save time, resources and budget by purchasing a framework and customizing the competencies to fit your needs.

¹ (if you need more info on the basics of competencies, be sure to check out our [Competency Toolkit](#) which includes our Competencies 101 resource.)

Key Decision Points

If you've decided to use a pre-built solution, it's time to start looking at vendors. There are a limited number of organizations competing in this space, but even still, it can be difficult terrain to wade through for HR and talent management professionals.

From our 30 years of experience in the competency industry, most decisions come down to a few key factors. Let's take a look at those.



Are you looking for skill-based competencies vs. behavioral?

Some vendors promote lists of skills as “competencies.” For most serious players in the competency landscape, competencies consist of not just skills, but the knowledge, skills and abilities critical to effective performance in any job.

Behavioral competencies outperform other skill-based approaches because they enable you to describe not just **what** an employee is expected to do on the job, but **how** they can be successful doing it. Unlike skill statements, behavioral competencies also provide a deeper level of observable criteria that enables them to be used to assess and develop people across the entire employee lifecycle.

By incorporating a combination of behavioral competencies—competencies describing the general behaviors required to perform effectively in a range of jobs—and technical competencies—competencies describing the application of knowledge and skills needed to perform effectively in a specific role or group of jobs—we offer a highly targeted solution to help our client reflect both the “soft skills” and “know-how” needed for successful job performance.

Single-level or multi-level?

If you're looking to use competencies as a checklist (“this person has the skills for the job”), then single-level competencies may be good enough for your needs. But in the vast majority of organizations, different jobs and job levels require different levels of skills, knowledge and abilities.

Breaking a competency into progressive levels of proficiency provides more accuracy and allows managers and employees to see how a competency is expressed differently depending on the amount of experience, skill, and aptitude required for a particular job. This additional detail provides a shared language during discussions about performance and greater accuracy when talking about specific workplace behaviors and expectations.

One of the great advantages of HRSG's multi-level competencies is their ability to create consistency and continuity across the talent lifecycle. This ultimately results in greater buy-in from employees due to the clarity the competencies provide to close skill gaps and achieve development goals.



Do you need content that works in tandem with the competencies?

Competencies can obviously be valuable content on their own, but their impact is maximized when there is additional material available to support roll-out of competencies across the employee lifecycle. Vendors will provide different content or services to support implementation, so it is critical to understand where you want to implement competencies.

For example, if your organization has experienced the high costs associated with a bad hire, you may want to look for a vendor that offers competency-based interview questions as part of the offering. If employee performance is an area of concern, learning objectives mapped to competencies will likely be a requirement for your program.

HRSG's offerings also include plenty of "wrap-around" content. This includes easy-assembly interview guides based on the competencies, mapped learning resources, job descriptions with embedded AI-mapped competencies, and much more. This "wrap-around" content significantly increases the use that you'll get out of your competency investment on a day-to-day basis.

Will you need to customize the competencies?

Determining whether you need, or want to customize the competencies and job profiles for your organizational context is another area of consideration, and not all providers equip you with the tools, or even the permission, to do so.

One of the key benefits of being able to customize the competency content is to help employees see the relevance of the competencies to their current, or future jobs. With many clients, isolating the changes to a common set of core competencies that apply to all jobs in the organization is more than sufficient in gaining the buy-in from stakeholders.

HRSG recognizes that jobs and organizations are unique. Our competencies can be easily customized to match your needs, and we provide you with the tools to easily manage and update this content. By adapting off-the-shelf competencies, you not only benefit from the cost savings associated with developing competencies from scratch, but you are able to reflect your organization's unique perspective and culture into the language used in the behavioral indicators.

Tools and support

Research has shown that two of the top barriers to successfully rolling out competencies is the **lack of internal know-how in competency management** and **lack of technology**. If you are not a competency expert, look for a vendor who can provide the tools and support that you need to help navigate these sometimes-complex projects, and manage your content over time.

CompetencyCore by HRSG gives you control over your competency initiative with purpose-built tools designed to make your life easier. Supported by a team of competency experts, HRSG clients get access to advisors who can ensure your initiative is set up for success and caution against common pitfalls.



Client spotlight:

Building competency profiles quickly for an entire organization

Adaptavist used CompetencyCore's included competency libraries as the basis for developing their organization's accurate, highly relevant competency profiles. HRSG's tools significantly accelerated the process of building and customizing competencies, linking them with roles and building an organizational competency hierarchy.

Hear it from the client:

The tool made it easy for me to customize the competencies and drop them into the libraries, drop them into the roles really quickly.

— Neil Penny, L&D Consultant,
Adaptavist



The HRSG Approach to Competencies

Our Methodology: How Do We Build Competencies?

HRSG's competencies are a product of thousands of hours of research by competency experts.

This internal knowledge is built on 30 years of experience in the competency consulting and development fields. Our confidence in our content comes from the thorough process that we have honed and perfected over those three decades.

Through extensive literature search, review of best practices, and job analysis conducted with client organizations, HRSG's competencies have been validated across a broad range of occupations and industries. Additionally, our content is regularly refined over time to ensure its continued relevance and to accurately reflect changes in the real-world labor market.

HRSG's Competency Framework

HRSG offers a comprehensive competency solution that covers the range of behavioral and technical knowledge, skills and abilities for jobs in virtually any work environment. Updates to our competency dictionary are released on an annual basis to reflect emerging trends in the workforce.

HRSG's Competencies

Universal competencies

These 'general', or 'behavioral' competencies articulate the softer, natural or inherent behaviors of your employees.

Examples:

- ✓ Attention to Detail
- ✓ Client Focus
- ✓ Emotional Intelligence
- ✓ Managing Conflicts
- ✓ Problem Solving

Technical competencies

Technical competencies describe the application of knowledge and skills needed for success in specialized fields.

Examples:

- ✓ Business Development (a technical competency for *sales professionals*)
- ✓ Fraud Detection and Control (a technical competency for *accounting & finance professionals*)
- ✓ Database Administration (a technical competency for *IT professionals*)

Leadership competencies

Leadership competencies capture the essence of effective leaders and translate it into measurable behaviors.

Examples:

- ✓ Acting with Empathy and Compassion
- ✓ Inspiring Others

How do we choose competencies to build?

Universal competencies

HRSO has identified five key categories that we look to ensure coverage on through our *universal competencies*. We've established these five key dimensions as being essential for effective performance in the modern world of work.

Category	Definition	Example Competencies
Thinking	The cognitive aspect of performance. Competencies related to understanding, analyzing, and processing information, as well as solving problems and making decisions based on that information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analytical Thinking• Creativity and Innovation• Decision Making• Data Literacy• Problem Solving
Achieving	The operational aspect of performance. Competencies related to initiating work, managing and organizing resources, executing, and accomplishing work goals or objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Managing Resources• Facilitation• Planning and Organizing• Quality Focus
Influencing	The interpersonal aspect of performance. Competencies related to connecting with people, motivating them, and growing them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Impact and Influence• Fostering Communication• Negotiating• Networking• Partnering
Becoming	The personal aspect of performance. Competencies related to an individual's application of personal resources, adapting, coping, and demonstrating ethics and integrity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adaptability• Agility• Attention to Detail• Continuous Learning• Resilience
Applying	Competencies that involve applying technical knowledge, skills, and abilities within the context of an occupation or profession. This category subsumes HRSO's occupation-specific technical competencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Account Management• Store Operations• Architecture• Database Design and Management

Technical competencies

HRSG has developed a standardized set of corporate technical competencies covering these primary business functions:

- Sales
- Marketing
- Accounting & Finance
- HR
- IT
- Business Operations
- Cyber Security
- Retail
- Data Analytics

The competencies are selected to ensure coverage across common business skills required to run businesses today. They are regularly reviewed and updated to ensure they align with market needs.

Additional industry-specific technical competencies are also available (eg. Agile Development, Cyber Security, Insurance, etc.), which have been scoped and built over time based on client requests and demands from the market.



What Do Our Competencies Look Like?

← Client Focus ▾

1 →	Providing service excellence to internal and/or external clients.				
2 →	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
3 →	Responds to immediate client needs	Maintains client contact	Provides added value	Provides seasoned advice	Ensures continued service excellence
4 →	Responds to client needs in a timely, professional, helpful, and courteous manner, regardless of client attitude.	Follows up with clients during and after delivery of services to ensure that their needs have been met.	Looks for ways to add value beyond clients' immediate requests.	Acts as a seasoned adviser, providing independent opinion on complex client problems and novel initiatives, and assisting with decision-making.	Formulates strategies and processes to evaluate emerging and longer-term opportunities and threats to meeting clients' needs.
	Shows clients that their perspectives are valued.	Maintains service to clients during critical periods.	Addresses the unidentified, underlying and long-term client needs.	Pushes client to consider difficult issues that are in their best interests.	Determines strategic business direction to best meet clients' evolving needs.
	Strives to meet service standards in all circumstances.	Addresses clients' issues in order of priority.	Enhances client service delivery systems and processes.	Advocates on behalf of clients to more senior management, identifying approaches that meet clients' needs as well as those of the organization.	Evaluates the client service model and service standards to identify areas for improvement.
		Keeps clients up-to-date on the progress of the service they are receiving and changes that affect them.	Anticipates clients' upcoming needs and concerns.		

Here's the breakdown of a sample HRSG competency:

- 1** The competency definition provides a high-level description of the competency.
- 2** The proficiency scale provides multiple proficiency levels for each competency. Each level reflects a progression from a basic demonstration of the competency towards a more complex and strategic demonstration. For example, an entry-level employee may need to demonstrate level 1 proficiency, while an executive may need to demonstrate level 4 or 5. Proficiency scales help you compare requirements across jobs, which is especially useful when determining potential career paths within the organization.
- 3** The notion for each level provides a high-level summary of the overall theme identified for that proficiency level.
- 4** A behavioral indicator provides a clear description of the observable behaviors that an employee will demonstrate on the job.

Competency Profiles – Putting Competencies into Action on Jobs

The start point for any competency initiative is a valid competency profile (sometimes referred to as a *competency model*) that supports all intended HR goals. A competency profile is a selection of competencies with specified proficiency levels required for successful performance in a particular job.

At HRSG, we define our competency profiles as the set of competencies, complete with the levels of proficiency required for success in a particular job or role. Whereas some vendors in the space may focus more on a skill-based approach to competencies, HRSG's competency profiles consist of a broader combination of observable abilities, skills, knowledge, motivations or traits defined in terms of the behaviors needed for successful job performance.

There are three basic criteria that competency structures must meet:

1. The competency profile includes the competencies that employees must have, both now and in the future, to ensure your organization can achieve its vision and support its values;
2. The competency profiles must support all of the intended HR applications; and
3. All competency profiles must be easy to use by all stakeholders.

Client spotlight:

Launching projects more quickly than you ever thought possible

First Commerce Credit Union used HRSG's pre-built content to get their career pathing initiative off the ground incredibly quickly. To do this, they relied on CompetencyCore, with its draft job descriptions + embedded competency profiles. From there, it's simply a matter of getting the users into the software, mapping everything appropriately, and giving them the power to build their own competency-driven career paths. The combination of the right content and the perfect software tools made HRSG the first choice for the team at First Commerce.

Hear it from the client:

We wanted it to be easy for us to manage in human resources and get launched, as well as be really user-friendly on the other side so our team members wouldn't be afraid to jump on board and get involved. Finding a package that hit those points was very important to us.

— Donna Moran, Culture Champion, First Commerce Credit Union

Account Executive

The Account Executive maintains the relationship between the customer and the company, and strives to build new business wherever possible.



Competencies

Account Management (Level 3)

- Generates revenue by developing business relationships with customers through telephone and face-to-face meetings.
- Controls revenue by maximizing profits through pricing strategies, margin control and mitigating customer loss.
- Manages sales pipeline from the proposal stage through customer acceptance and implementation.

Managing the Sales Process (Level 3)

- Evaluates the effectiveness of the sales process to recommend improvement.
- Facilitates/leads the sales process by mapping it to customer responses.
- Adapts the organization's sales process to the size, type and style of customer.
- Utilizes customer profile information to develop account strategy and relationships.
- Deploys all available resources to maximize both organization return-on-investment and customers' desired financial results.

Business Development (Level 3)

- Represents the organization in face-to-face meetings with customers.
- Connects with multiple contacts within the prospective customer's buying process.
- Qualifies the right product/services solution to fit the customer's needs.
- Uses differing sources of information to develop quotes and proposals.

Partnering (Level 3)

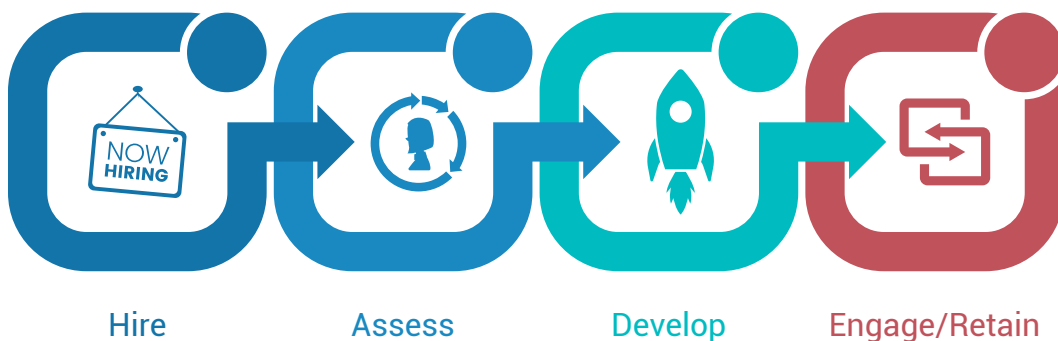
- Captures opportunities to partner, identifying existing opportunities and creating new ones.
- Assesses the value of entering into partnerships in terms of achieving short- and long-term goals.
- Initiates partnerships and alliances that promote organizational objectives.

Client Focus (Level 3)

- Looks for ways to add value beyond clients' immediate requests.
- Addresses the unidentified, underlying and long-term client needs.
- Enhances client service delivery systems and processes.
- Anticipates clients' upcoming needs and concerns.



Using Competency Content Effectively Throughout the Talent Lifecycle



Competency-based selection, development and retention programs can provide huge benefits to organizations who can implement them properly. But mobilizing them effectively throughout the talent lifecycle has, in the past, been a big challenge for some organizations. Today, that's all changed. Developments in cloud-based software, like HRSG's CompetencyCore, have made it accessible to functionally use competencies across the talent lifecycle.

A typical process starts with mapping competencies to your company's job descriptions. This process gives your job

descriptions powerful competency profiles that foster practical day-to-day applications for your competency architecture. CompetencyCore's exclusive Competency Suggestion Engine allows you to do this with the click of a mouse.

[Click here to watch our video overview.](#)

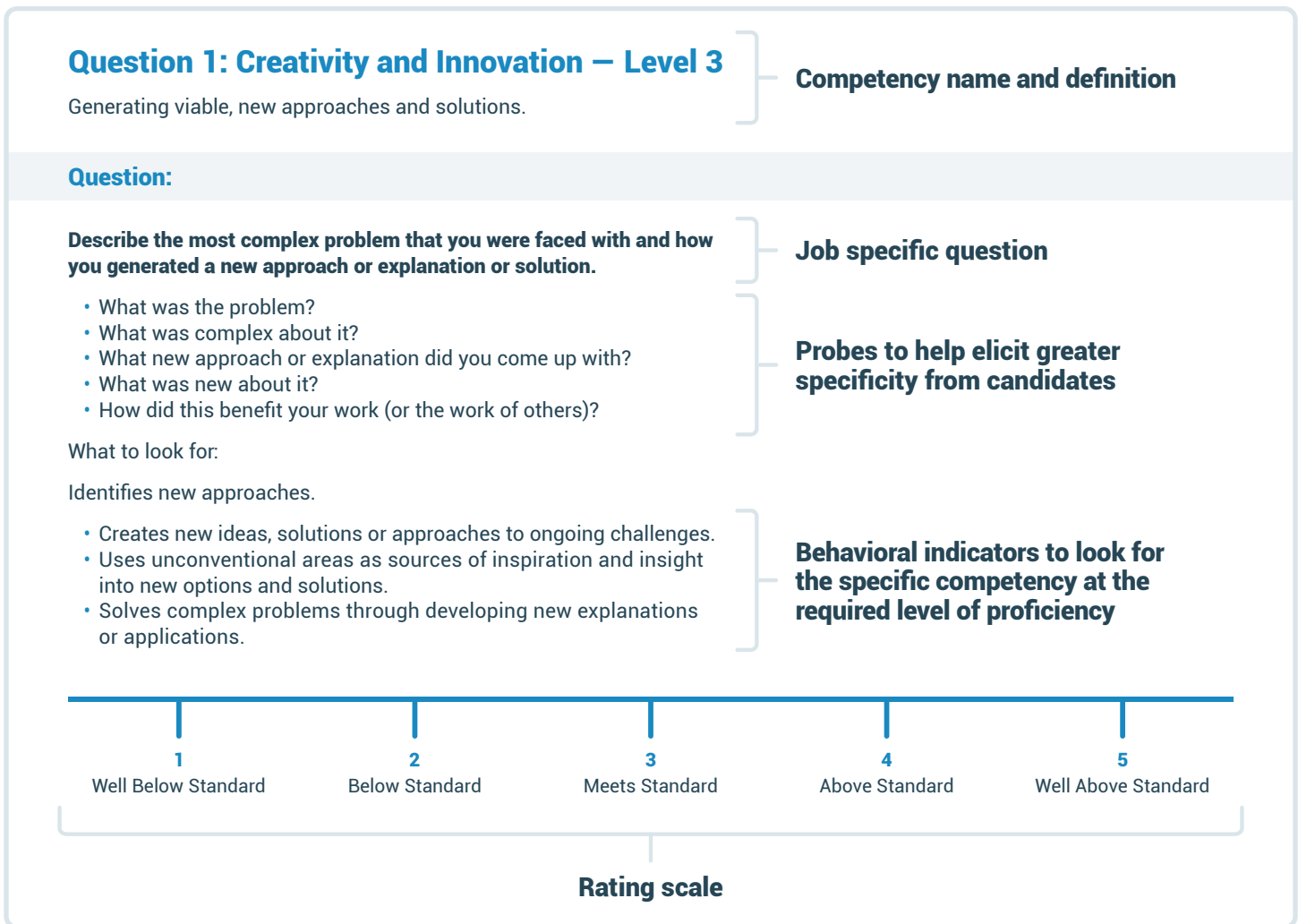
With your competency-embedded job descriptions in place, you have the power to truly operationalize your company's competencies throughout the entire talent management lifecycle. Here's a brief look at how that works.

Bring Real Structure to Your Hiring and Selection Process

Carry out structured, behavioral interviews, using the “STAR” method (asking the candidate to describe the situation, task, action, and result) to assess candidate-job fit.

Because the interview is based directly on the competencies, it keeps interviews more objective and planted in reality. Most importantly, hiring decisions are made based on consistent and standardized criteria.

The structure of behavioral interview questions



Perform Regular Assessments Throughout an Employees’ Tenure











Later on in the employee’s tenure, HR or department managers can carry out assessments – again, all linked back to that original job description and those competencies required from the role. Competencies make self assessments and supervisor assessments really easy – you don’t have to create assessment questions, just turn the competencies into questions that people rate themselves against. So in a development context, they function as a lightweight assessment mechanism; all enabled and implemented easily through the software.



Map and Assign Learning Resources to Continue Employees' Development Programs

Adding another layer to how competencies can be used in the development section of your HR programs, CompetencyCore gives managers and administrative personnel the tools to help employees improve their skills on their own accord; if competency gaps are identified during one of those aforementioned assessments, the organization can provide employees with learning resources pre-mapped to competencies to develop and strengthen those gaps.

Example list of learning resources

Name	Provider	Source	Link	Bookmark
Becoming a Resilient Person – The Science of Stress Management Agility (level 1)	Clayton Cook	edX.org		
Agile Development in Practice (Project-centered Course) Agility (level 2 & 3)	University of Virginia	Coursera.org		
A Crash Course in Data Science Data Literacy (level 1)	Johns Hopkins University	Coursera.org		
Analyzing and Visualizing Data with Excel Data Literacy (level 3)	Microsoft	edX.org		
21 Day Crash Course in Emotional Intelligence Emotional Intelligence (level 1 & 2)	Dr. Patricia Thompson	Udemy.com		



Allow Your People to Build Career Paths

One of the most powerful motivators to keep top employees engaged is opportunities for growth. With your competencies mapped to every job, there's total transparency on exactly what skills and behaviors, at what levels, your people need to demonstrate in order to take their next step (or even reach their dream job).

CompetencyCore by HRSG empowers you, the busy HR professional, to put these programs into place at your organization with the confidence that you're setting things up the smart way.

Why Choose HRSG?

You've got options when you're looking for a provider to help with your competency initiative. We know that, and we know that we're not the biggest company out there. We also know that for the companies that we've worked with, we've been their best option. Here are some of the common themes we've heard from organizations that have worked with us in the past.

A Flexible Approach to Content

Our competency philosophy is to provide our clients with the most accurate, relevant, battle-tested competency content available on the market. But we don't insist that we know the intricacies of your business better than you do. That's why we not only allow customization of our content, but we actually fully encourage it.

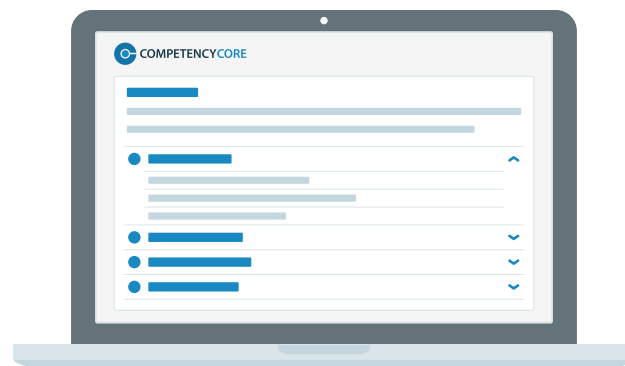
High Quality, Substantial Depth

The more relevant your competency content is to the people who are on the front lines, the more effective the uptake will be. HRSG's technical competencies provide unparalleled insights into the real skills that employees in technical positions need to succeed, with the right balance between essential and exhaustive.

Our Service Commitment

HRSG occupies a unique space in the competency industry; we've been around for long enough to have virtually seen it all, yet we remain nimble enough to give your project the support it deserves.

This personal attention and dedication has been a contributing factor in the success of thousands of competency projects we've worked on over the years, and helped our clients overcome many of the common pitfalls that can afflict competency implementation projects.



Providing the Right Purpose-Built Tools to Mobilize Your Project

As our competency-based consulting business continued to grow into the mid 2000s, our clients started to request easier ways to manage competency content on an ongoing basis. Gone were the days of thick binders and filing cabinets. HRSG was one of the first organizations to offer competency management software – at first, upon custom requests for clients – and today in the form of *CompetencyCore*, our leading software tool available to all organizations.

Our software has evolved to help you implement competency-based approaches with a fraction of the resources previously required. Our AI-powered processes slash the time required to undertake competency-profiling activities, and our AI-generated job descriptions and competency profiles ensure you are starting with job data based on latest labor market trends.

Here's What Others Are Saying

“With HRSG competencies, **there's a specific set of behaviors that make it clear**. We can create interview questions around these competencies, and we can talk to people about where they need to be in their jobs, or what they need to move to the next proficiency level for the next job. **It makes it very easy.**

— Tracey Piper, Director of Human Resources - Talent Management at **Destination XL (DXL)**

“One of the best things to come out of this competency project was that **we now have a common language to talk about performance, development, etc.** When we have discussions between departments they go a lot more smoothly and **we achieve more because we're all on the same page as to what constitutes success.**

— Mr. Thamer Al Quadaimi, Executive Manager of Learning and Talent Development at **ELM**

Work with the Experts

Schedule a 1:1 chat with one of HRSG's competency experts to get started.

Chat with HRSG

About HRSG

For three decades, HRSG has delivered products and services to define talent needs, address skill deficiencies and improve individual and organizational performance.

Our Products division has distilled that 30 years of expertise into a competency, job description and career management software solution. Leveraging the power of AI, CompetencyCore™ is unlike any other product on the market, bringing together the power of competencies and the utility of job descriptions.

Our Talent Management Solutions division delivers best practice professional services in competency-based management, testing and assessment. In addition, we train HR professionals worldwide in our competency-based management methodologies.

To learn more about how HRSG makes HR professionals proactive and in-control, visit us at www.hrsg.ca or call 1-866-574-7041 x600.