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| **Core Competencies** | |
| **Professional Behavior** | |
| **Definition** | Modeling agency values in support of vision and mission. Establishing and sustaining trusting relationships by accurately interpreting interpersonal interactions, managing one’s own reactions, and appropriately responding to others’ behavior. |
| **Importance** | HR Professionals conduct almost all of their work in consultative or team environments, where personal relationships and trust are critical to individual and organizational success. Behaviors have a significant impact on the success of the relationship, and the behaviors of one HR professional can impact – positively or negatively – the perception of all other HR Professionals within the organization. Self-awareness and a focus on continual self-improvement are keys to success. |
| **How do Washington State Human Resource Staff Demonstrate This Competency?** | |
| **Key Elements** | **Distinguishing Behaviors** |
| **Builds self-awareness.** | * Seeks understanding of how others perceive you, building on perceived strengths and seeking to improve any perceived weaknesses or challenges * Maintains awareness of the alignment between personal and organizational values * Demonstrates awareness of own emotional triggers, strengths and developmental needs, as well as the impact of own behavior on others * Gains awareness of personal role within the context of the organization’s business, decision-making model, and key influencers |
| **Maintains self-control.** | * Ensures own behavior, actions and decisions are aligned with the employer’s values as well as state ethics laws * Modifies behavior based on self-awareness and customer feedback to improve impact and build relationships * Behaves in compliance with the professional standards established by your HR certificating organization, such as SHRM, IPMA-HR, and/or HRCI, if applicable * Speaks positively to employees about the goals of leadership; is supportive of management direction * Behaves in a professional manner with internal and external colleagues * Advice is objective and aligned with professional role |
| **Maintains or enhances self-esteem.** | * Helps others feel respected and appreciated by sincerely and specifically acknowledging their ideas, contributions and achievements * Focuses on facts and intentions to maintain another’s self-esteem when things don’t go well * Exhibits confidence and pride in delivering information and options in assigned area * Accepts a manager choosing a different option than recommended, without feeling personally devalued * Seeks opportunities to apply new learning to current HR practices * Takes responsibility for own actions; acknowledges and remedies errors |
| **Listens and responds with empathy.** | * Encourages and seeks to understand different points of view * Asks clarifying questions to better understand the input of others * Seeks to fully understand an issue before offering advice * Considers issues from all relevant perspectives * Interacts respectfully with stakeholders, including labor organizations |
| **Asks for help and encourages involvement.** | * Asks for others’ opinions and ideas to gain their commitment and encourages others to take responsibility * Solicits ideas through questioning * Advocates for effective use of internal teams * Seeks a balanced discussion on issues by seeking involvement of impacted parties * Seeks consultation with other HR and related professionals (Attorney General’s Office, Ethics Board, etc.) on how to handle unusual or precedent-setting situations * Seeks input on the impact of specific courses of action to other organizational concerns, such as budget, risk management, public perception, etc. * Builds effective networks * Develops initiatives with colleagues in other departments |
| **Shares thoughts, feelings and rationale.** | * Appropriately and honestly discloses feelings and insights in order to build trust * Shares the “why” behind decisions, ideas or changes * Establishes relationships of trust and confidence, where customers feel comfortable in sharing and hearing difficult information and options * Strives to be frank, but non-judgmental * Provides and welcomes constructive feedback |
| **Provides support without removing responsibility.** | * Offers support while building the other person’s sense of task ownership * Resists taking over * Boosts confidence that the other person can successfully complete the task * Formulates alternatives to achieve the organization’s business strategies * Supports the decision made |
| **Takes full advantage to receive and explore feedback about own performance.** | * Proactively seeks out feedback from others on own performance to identify areas for improvement * Responds favorably when offered feedback, even when the feedback is negative * Engages in one-on-one conversations with chain of command and customers * Uses available tools and methods (ex: 360 reviews) to acquire relevant feedback |
| **Uses feedback to take action to improve knowledge, skill, behavior, and impact on others.** | * Makes effective use of information received to modify own behaviors and guide development * Seeks assistance of knowledgeable others (supervisor, peers, mentors, professional organizations, etc.) in mapping out own growth and development * Keeps current on trends and changes within assigned HR specialty areas, as well as within the organization’s line of business |
| **Personal Growth Activities** may include, but are not limited to, on-the-job experience, developmental assignments, shadowing, experiential learning, participating in training as a leader or participant and other life experiences. Remember that many developmental activities can and will occur outside of work as part of your personal life.  **Specific EXAMPLES of developmental opportunities for this competency include:** | |
| **EXAMPLES of Developmental Activities**   * Interview coworkers, peers, and others whom you trust. Be sure to discuss their definitions of ‘professional behavior’ as well as your own. * Work on joint or collaborative work teams that are recognized for their professional behavior. * Volunteer to lead a workgroup or committee where you will be required to exercise specific professional behavior skillsets to move participants towards a specific outcome. * Participate in formal or informal groups of like-minded individuals where you can discuss, practice and learn about professional behaviors. These can include professional organizations, community based organizations, your PTA, sports organization or church, service clubs, and similar organizations. * Mentor subordinate staff on professional behavior, or find a mentor for yourself. * Read books such as Crucial Confrontations by Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan, ane Al Switzler; McGraw Hill, 2005, ISBN 0-07-144652-4. * Read or listen to The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference, a book by Malcolm Gladwell, Little, Brown; 2000, ISBN 0-316-31696-2. * Watch a TED TALK, such as “How to Speak Up for Yourself” by Adam Galinsky (2016); use the included “reading list” provided with TED TALKs to further explore topics you find interesting. * Commit to reading related journal articles on a regular basis in journals from IPMA-HR, SHRM, ATD or others; start a journal to record your notes, identify what you’ve learned and how you can apply your findings personally or in the workplace. * Pursue professional certification through IPMA-HR, SHRM, ATD, and/or HRCI. | |
| **EXAMPLES of Training**   * Formal training on professional behavior key elements of interest to you. * Attend SHRM’s “[Raising Sensitive Issues on a Team](https://store.shrm.org/education/elearning/leadership-and-navigation/raising-sensitive-issues-on-a-team-el-dc-123.html)” eLearning, which is part of their Leadership & Navigation focus series. * Participate in an ATD, SHRM, Labor and Employment Relations Association (LERA) or IPMA-HR local, regional or national organization-provided webinar, training or conference offering specific sessions or training on professional behavior elements for Human Resources Professionals. * Specialized focused meetings and trainings for Washington State human resource employees offered by State HR and the Office of the Attorney General Labor and Personnel section. * Consider attending programs offered by the Cascade Executive Programs at the University of Washington’s Daniel J. Evans School of Public Affairs. * Consider obtaining an advanced degree in your area of specialization. | |
| **Recruiting** for candidates who have this competency may include, but is not limited to, providing clear statements about qualifications desired or required in the recruitment announcement, performing specific outreach activities to organizations or groups whose members often possess the desired competency, developing interview questions that assess the candidates competence, and asking reference questions that assess the candidates competence.  **Specific EXAMPLES of recruiting activities for this competency include:** | |
| **Example of qualification statement:**  A highly qualified candidate will be a role model for others in the profession; will carry out professional responsibilities in a thorough manner making efforts to exceed expectations; will treat others with respect; will interact with others in a collaborative and supportive fashion; can communicate agency expectations to fellow employees; are personally responsible for the integrity of their actions; promotes principles of nondiscrimination and equality; exercises sound judgment; consistently remains knowledgeable on current principles and practices in the HR profession.  **Example of outreach activity:** Source the job announcement to the SHRM journal/online career center, or contact known individuals with this skillset asking for names of potential candidates who demonstrate this competency.  **Examples of interview questions:**   1. Describe how you decide you need help from your peers, and how you go about obtaining it? 2. Tell me about a time when you sought out or received feedback about your behavior, or your professional knowledge/skill level? What did you do with the feedback? 3. Give an example of when you had to implement to a policy or direction with which you did not personally agree. 4. Describe the process you used when having to make an important decision. 5. Tell me about a time when you had to implement change in the workplace. 6. What do believe your peers would say if I asked them about your level of self-awareness? Why?   **Examples of reference check questions:**   1. Tell me a bit about how the candidate has conducted him/herself in relationship to your organization’s expected behaviors? 2. Does the candidate seek out feedback on her/his performance and behaviors? If yes, how does the candidate respond to the feedback, and does the candidate end up using the feedback for self-improvement. 3. Describe how the candidate responds to customers of his/her services. How well does the candidate understand the situation before offering advice? 4. Is the candidate more likely, in your experience, to provide direction to customers, or options from which a customer can choose? Is this (the options/direction) related to the organization’s expectations of the candidate, or is it more related to the candidate’s personal preferred approach? 5. How effective is the candidate in influencing others, especially those over whom they do not have control? 6. How would the candidate approach influencing others to implement an organizational direction that the candidate does not personally agree with? | |

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| **Identifying Required Proficiency Levels**  While behavioral indicators are used to help in evaluating performance, proficiency levels describe the level of a competency required to perform a specific job successfully. These levels relate to the work required for **a specific job**. Different jobs require different levels of proficiency for successful performance. Not all jobs will require the highest level of proficiency and some may not require specific competencies at all. The proficiency levels outlined below apply to all of the HR Core Competencies. | |
| **Proficiency Level** | **Proficiency Description** |
| **Entry** | * Limited or no use of competency required for the job * Competency has been minimally demonstrated * May have had limited opportunity to apply the competency * May have limited understanding of the competency |
| **Developing** | * Basic understanding or knowledge required for the job * Basic understanding and knowledge sufficient enough to handle routing tasks * Requires some guidance or supervision when applying the competency * Understands and can discuss terminology and concepts related to the competency |
| **Independent** | * Detailed knowledge, understanding and application of the competency required to be successful in the job * Ability to handle non-routine problems and situations * Requires minimal guidance or supervision/works independently * Consistently demonstrates success in the competency * Capable of assisting others in the application of the competency |
| **Advanced** | * Highly developed knowledge, understanding, and application of the competency required to be successful in the job and organization (total mastery) * Can apply knowledge outside the scope of one’s position * Is able to coach or teach others on the competency * Has a long-term perspective * Helps develop materials and resources in the competency |
| **Expert** | * Specialist/Authority level knowledge, understanding, and application of the competency required to be successful in the job * Recognized by others as an expert in the competency and is sought out by others throughout the organization (expert in the area) * Works across team, department, and organizational functions * Applies skills across multiple projects or functions * Able to explain issues in relation to broader organizational issues * Creates new applications or processes * Has a strategic focus |