



Competencies for Early-Career HR Professionals
PPT—Session 1: Course Introduction and HR Expertise Competency
Instructor Notes

Slide 1

Instructor Notes:

- If this session occurs early in your semester, please have the students introduce themselves to each other.
- To make the introductions a bit more engaging and memorable, you may want to ask them to provide the following information as part of their introductions:
 - Full name.
 - Major.
 - Year/stage they are in the university program.
 - One thing about themselves that no one else in the room knows about them.
- The four sessions within this course are intended to be 75 minutes in duration each. In the materials you will find some optional activities that you may run if you prefer to make the sessions a bit longer. We also provide several discussion questions along the way and prompt you to discuss a few of the questions that appear on the slide. If you have additional time, you may choose to cover more of these discussion questions.
- Also consider moving the students around into different small groups during the course. It is best if students have an opportunity to work with many different students during this class. You can reassign teams using many methods:
 - Count them off by threes and have them assemble by their assigned number.
 - Group them according to years of experience in HR (or years of work experience).
 - Have them line up by birth month, and then have them assemble by like “seasons” (i.e., all January through March “babies” sit together).

Slide 2

Instructor Notes:

- Before class begins, collect the results of the Web Safari and the career plan. Let the students know you will review them and send the results to them by next week with your feedback.
- Review what is due today.

Materials for This Session:

- SHRM HR Competency Model. If students would like to download this article, it can be accessed at <https://www.shrm.org/learningandcareer/competency-model/pages/default.aspx>
- *Evolution of Work and the Worker: Five Key Trends from SHRM's Special Expertise Panels*. It can be accessed at <http://www.shrm.org/about/foundation/products/Documents/2015%20Evol%20of%20Work-Panel%20Report-FINAL.pdf>
- SHRM Sample HR Job descriptions (included in the preparatory package).
- Career Plan Template (included in the preparatory package).
- Web Safari Template (included in the preparatory package).
- *How to Pursue a Career in HR: Five Simple Steps*. It can be accessed at <http://www.shrm.org/academicinitiatives/about/pages/5stepshrcareer.aspx>

Slide 3

Instructor Notes:

- Review the learning objectives.
- Be sure to emphasize that the course is intended to give students several opportunities to apply the concepts they are studying, and to see what these concepts “look like” when practiced in the field of HR.
- Ask the students what they hope to get out of these four sessions. See if they have had particular questions or curiosities about HR in the past.

Slide 4

Instructor Notes:

- Review the lessons that are covered in today's session.

- Note: Content and activities for the four sessions were carefully chosen by the SHRM subject-matter experts. We also fully appreciate that instructors enjoy bringing their own perspectives and content to the course. You are free to add in more mini-cases, articles or any other content you see fit to drive the learning outcomes. Please ensure that any additional materials have proper citations and do not infringe on any copyright laws.
- Depending on how many optional activities you add, you may need to expand how much time is devoted to each of the four modules.

Slide 5

Instructor Notes:

- Ask students (by a show of hands) how many have previous experience working in HR. Note: If no one raises his or her hand, go to the alternative approach provided.
- For those who have their hands raised, ask them to share some of the things they really enjoy about being in HR.
- Then ask if anyone can share an example of a challenge they face when working in HR.
- Try to tie the students' examples to some of the content we are about to cover. For example, a student may bring up a situation in which a client or co-worker demanded that the student do something that he or she considered unethical. Explain that in this course we will look at the issue of ethics and what steps HR professionals need to take to ensure they are conducting themselves in an ethical manner.
- **[Alternative]** If none of the students has previous experience working in HR, use any of the following questions to get the conversation started:
 - Why do you think people are drawn to the HR profession?
 - What assumptions do you think people make about HR professionals?
 - What do you think are the primary advantages of being an HR professional?

Slide 6

Instructor Notes:

- Review the course purpose on the slide.
- Point out that the four-session course we are about to cover is based on SHRM's Competency Model.
- Stress that although the model includes nine competencies, we will be focusing on the four competencies that are most essential for entry-level HR practitioners.

- Mention that the course is geared toward both graduate- and undergraduate-level students and that it is just an overview of the entry-level competencies.
- You may choose to also mention that the four sessions we will cover are intended to be included in larger university programs (such as BBA programs).

Slide 7

Instructor Notes:

- Review the four sessions outlined on this (and the next) slide.
- Remind students that the entire course is four 75-minute sessions. With time being limited, we will have to focus the content on high-level descriptions of the competencies and on a few practical exercises that will help students understand what these competencies “look like” in practice.
- The course also includes preparatory assignments for each session, which students should have already received and completed for Session 1.
- Point out that in red font (next to each session number) we are highlighting the four introductory-level competencies that will be covered within the four sessions:
 - HR Expertise.
 - Relationship Management.
 - Ethical Practice.
 - Communication.

Slide 8

Instructor Notes:

- Finish describing Sessions 3 and 4.
- Ask if anyone has any questions.

Slide 9

Instructor Notes:

- Ask the students to describe the benefits a profession receives by having a professional competency model. Some typical responses include:
 - Professionalizes the workforce.
 - Helps clarify roles and responsibilities with clients and those we serve.

- Creates a development path for those within the profession.
- Organizes content related to the professional skills that are required to be successful within the profession.
- Creates a basis for measurement and certification of professional skills.
- Point out that within HR, it is particularly important that we hold ourselves accountable to a professional competency model, since we advise clients in other disciplines about the importance of competency-based education (i.e., we need to model the principles that we espouse).

Materials for This Lesson:

- You may want to hold up a printed copy of the SHRM Competency Model so that the students are clear on which reading assignment you are referring to.

Slide 10

Instructor Notes:

- Describe for the students how the world of business is demanding that HR take on a direct business-related role. While the transactional part of HR will always have a place, demonstrating the value of HR requires close strategic alignment with the business goals.
- Point out that the headlines you see here are becoming more and more prevalent in the business press. At SHRM conferences as well, more and more HR experts are describing the shift they needed to go through to ensure they were business relevant.
- For the Tom Friedman quote provided on the slide (which comes from the 2014 SHRM Annual Conference), mention that Mr. Friedman went on to state that “average is over. . . . It’s no longer about what you know, *but what you can do with what you know* [emphasis added].” The new SHRM competency-based certification is based on this same principle. The certification tests for specific behaviors that indicate what you can do with what you know.
- Mr. Friedman also pointed out that “we . . . as HR professionals, will need to find our ‘extra.’ ” Point out that if HR professionals don’t “find their extra,” others will determine the future of our profession.
- Describe for the students how having a professional workforce that rests on a foundation of validated competencies helps ensure that the HR field continues to become more and more business relevant (as evidenced by competencies in the model such as Business Acumen, Leadership and Navigation, and Consultation).

Additional Content:

- Have a copy of the *Harvard Business Review* and *Wall Street Journal* articles, in case the students ask you any specific questions about these articles.
- *WSJ* article “Is It a Dream or a Drag? Companies Without HR”: Note that this article was removed from the *WSJ* site; students may be able to retrieve a copy of the article in the periodicals section of the library.
- *HBR* article “It’s Time to Split HR”: <https://hbr.org/2014/07/its-time-to-split-hr>
- Note: Over time these articles may become outdated. While SHRM will monitor this, please feel free to bring in other articles you have read that discuss new expectations for HR and that you think are important for students to also read and discuss. We have intentionally left the dates for the articles and conferences off the slide, to prevent the course from becoming dated.

Slide 11

Instructor Notes:

- Ask the students what they believe is occurring in the business world that is driving this enhanced desire to make HR a more integrated, relevant and flexible part of the business machine. Typical responses include:
 - Increased competitiveness.
 - The need for an agile workforce.
 - New competitive pressures caused by globalization.
 - A more diverse workforce. This includes all types of diversity, including race, gender, age, gender identity and cultural. In particular, because retirement ages are increasing, we are likely to have four to five generations of employees in the workforce at the same time. Increased government scrutiny of business practices (coupled with increased amounts of regulation within some countries) contributes to diversity.
 - The need for an adaptive system that accommodates four or five generations of employees within the workforce.
- Point out that all of these changes in the business world (and they also apply to the world of public service, not-for-profits and civilian military organizations) have driven HR to transform itself from a highly transactional posture to a more strategic stance.

Slide 12

Instructor Notes:

- Point out that “competency” has many definitions, and each tends to term things a bit differently. The definition provided on this slide tends to be the most prevalent in the HR and training literature.
- Emphasize that this definition includes “other characteristics” that are not mentioned in many other competency definitions and models. However, these characteristics are critical to job success.
- Describe for the students how competencies are essentially categories of skills needed to perform key organizational functions. For example, for a plumber “Estimating” (the cost of a job) might be a category (i.e., “a competency”), and within that category are multiple, specific skills and knowledge that the plumber needs to estimate correctly. These might include accurate measurement, knowledge of plumbing products, knowledge of building codes, ability to accurately estimate labor hours and mathematical skills. A totally different category of skills for a plumber might be “Fluid Dynamics” or “Safe Practices.”
- Regardless of which profession we are examining, competency models provide a framework for understanding the interrelationship of skills and knowledge to each other, and to essential job tasks.

Slide 13

Instructor Notes:

- Briefly review the steps provided on the slide.
- Make the following key points:
 - To develop the competencies and the overall model, SHRM followed best practices, as delineated by the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (SIOP) taskforce on competency modeling.
 - SHRM also examined the relevant academic and professional literature about competency modeling.
 - Based on a review and synthesis of relevant research and professional literature, SHRM first developed a working model to describe the competencies needed by HR professionals.
 - This review focused primarily on existing HR competency models as well as on literature that describes the work responsibilities of HR professionals.

- The Assurance of Learning Assessment (2011) and the Curriculum Guidelines (2013) are derivative products of the SHRM Competency Model and are particularly relevant to students of HR because they inform college- and university-level courses.

Additional Content:

- *Content Validation Study of the SHRM Competency Model*. Pages 1-7 of the report provide additional information on the process that was used, if you want to provide additional details.
- Available online at <https://www.shrm.org/LearningAndCareer/competency-model/Documents/14-0705%20Content%20Validation%20Study%203.pdf>
- Optional talking points on model development: If you feel that your students would benefit from reviewing the research that supported the model development and content validation, you may cover the following information. These points are in the student guide, so you may want to refer to them in the student guide:
 - Literature review: The literature review revealed 35 different competency models related to HR.
 - Focus groups: SHRM conducted 111 focus groups with 1,200 HR professionals in 29 cities globally. The groups included HR professionals across all stages of their careers. These focus groups were designed first to establish a core competency model and second to identify proficiency standards across four stages of an HR career for each competency domain. Of the 111 focus groups, 60 were conducted with U.S. professionals, and 51 were conducted with professionals from the international community.
 - Chief human resource officer (CHRO) survey: SHRM surveyed 640 CHROs asking them to identify the most critical competencies for success on their job and the jobs of their senior direct reports.
 - SHRM member survey: In February 2012, SHRM conducted a survey of its membership with the aim of validating the importance of each competency, as well as the behavioral indicators of proficiency. More than 32,000 members (at all career levels) responded. Thirty-three nations were represented in the responses.

Slide 14

Instructor Notes:

- Make the following points:
- There are two types of competencies within any competency model: a) **technical** competencies; and b) **nontechnical (behavioral)** competencies.

- **Technical competencies** are also described as “foundational competencies” because they represent the base *knowledge* that successful HR professionals need about a wide variety of HR functions. As shown on the slide, the HR profession leads a host of core people functions such as strategy development, employment law and compensation.
- **Nontechnical competencies** are also described as “behavioral competencies” because they represent what successful HR professionals *do* with their foundational knowledge of the profession across all of the HR functions. For example, an HR professional must be able to consult and communicate when developing strategy, when engaging in employee/labor relations and when conducting training. In other words, the nontechnical competencies are cross-cutting regardless of the specific function in which the HR professional is engaged.

Additional Points:

- When people typically think about HR, they tend to visualize responsibilities related to the HR domains (such as employee/labor relations or employment law.) Point out that these domains are often how HR departments are organized, and they represent key HR functions.
- While it is true that the foundation of HR practice is the types of technical expertise you see here, to be truly successful in HR and to grow your career, you need more than HR technical knowledge; you need to be adept at the behavioral competencies as well. As you can see on the slide, all of the other SHRM competencies (with the exception of HR Expertise) are nontechnical/behaviorally-based competencies.

Slide 15

Instructor Notes:

- Continue making the point that HR success depends on a combination of technical skills and behaviors.
- Use the following bicycle analogy to drive this point home:
 - The rear wheel of the bike provides forward movement for the bike rider. It is essential that this movement be generated in a consistent, balanced and efficient manner. It takes a fair amount of knowledge to understand how to pedal forward correctly to move efficiently, how to apply the hand brakes to stop, how to move the gear selector to adjust the chain tension, how to balance on the seat so that your legs can provide reliable power to the pedals, and how to evenly apply pressure on the “up stroke” and “down stroke” of the pedaling motion so that your two legs work in concert.
 - However, being incredibly efficient at providing power to the rear wheels is not enough. It is just as important that you engage in accurate movements of the front wheel to safely get to where you need to go. It actually takes a lot more judgment to know what

to do with the front wheel. You constantly need to survey what is going on ahead of you, assess road conditions, calculate breaking distance and know the rules of the road. You also need to have a clear sense of where your destination is, and how you are supposed to get there. If you are riding with a friend, you also need to be conscious of his or her location and effectively communicate your desire to turn or brake.

- **Final Point:** This is analogous to the different types of HR competencies. The technical competencies provide an “engine” to move HR forward in concert with the rest of the organization. We must provide critical services such as training and development, talent acquisition and total rewards to be sure we are in step with the business. However, there is also a tremendous amount of judgment we must employ to ensure we navigate correctly through multiple situations and provide our services in an ethical and justified manner.

Slide 16

Instructor Notes:

- Review the SHRM Competency Model. Review the following definitions with the class (they also appear in the student guide).
- **HR Expertise:** Knowledge of principles, practices and functions of effective human resource management.
- **Ethical Practice:** Integration of integrity and accountability throughout all organizational and business practices.
- **Business Acumen:** Ability to understand and apply information with which to contribute to the organization’s strategic plan.
- **Critical Evaluation:** Interpret information with which to make business decisions and recommendations.
- **Consultation:** Providing direct guidance to organizational stakeholders.
- **Relationship Management:** Developing and managing interactions to provide service and to support the organization.
- **Communication:** Ability to effectively exchange information with stakeholders.
- **Leadership & Navigation:** Ability to direct and contribute to initiatives and processes within the organization.
- **Global & Cultural Effectiveness:** The ability to value and consider the perspectives and backgrounds of all parties.
- See if the students are clear about the distinctions between the nine HR competencies.

- Point out again that from this point forward in the class, we will be focusing only on the competencies relevant to entry-level HR professionals (Communication, Relationship Management, Ethical Practice and HR Expertise).
- Also mention that HR Expertise is the only competency in SHRM's model that is considered a knowledge competency. All of the other competencies are considered nontechnical or behavioral competencies.
- Note: This slide has an animated circle and text box titled "Competencies for Early-Career HR Professionals." Click the mouse once to activate the graphic while you are making this point.
- Remind students that technical competency represents *what you know*, whereas behavioral competencies *represent how you convert your knowledge into observable behaviors*. Success is not just about what you know, but also about how you use the knowledge you possess.

Slide 17

Instructor Notes:

- Explain to the students that each competency has several components to it.
- You may want to use the analogy of ingredients in soup to explain the component pieces of competencies (i.e., just as soup requires many ingredients, competencies have all of these components).
- Use the following information to explain what each component is:
 - **Title:** This is the title of the competency.
 - **Definition:** This is the overall definition of the competency.
 - **Subcompetencies:** These are competencies related to or subsumed by the relevant general competency.
 - **Behaviors:** These are behaviors demonstrated by individuals at the highest level of proficiency on the indicated competency.
 - **Proficiency Standards:** These are standards for proficiency at the four career stages (early, mid, senior and executive). *Show examples of the proficiency standards on the next two slides.*

Slide 18

Instructor Notes:

- Point out how these proficiency standard statements are arranged over the four career levels. Each level gets successfully more complex and requires more experience. Therefore, the proficiency standards get more complex and require more skills to master.
- The next slide shows the senior and executive level descriptors.
- Do not spend much time on this. Just point it out; then provide the URL for the SHRM Competency Model if students want more information:
- <https://www.shrm.org/learningandcareer/competency-model/pages/default.aspx>

Slide 20

Instructor Notes:

- Point out this graphic depicts the career of an HR professional as he or she gains more experience.
- When explaining the graphic, make sure they know the graphics with the number in them represent years of experience (e.g., “Mid 3-7” denotes 3 to 7 years of experience).
- Also point out that most people in HR begin their career as a specialist in some function (e.g., a compensation specialist), and as they gain experience, they learn a lot about other specialties. Ultimately they may advance through their specialty, but typically executive-level HR professionals have to be knowledgeable about *all* HR functions.

Slide 21

Instructor Notes:

- Let the participants know that we are now focusing on the first of four, entry-level competencies (HR Expertise).
- Because this first session introduces the course, and reviews the overall SHRM Competency Model, we will have to review the HR Expertise competency at a high level.
- Since HR Expertise feeds into every other competency (i.e., it is the foundation of all other competencies), we will be able to refer back to it and explore further during subsequent sessions.
- The next three sessions will each focus exclusively on one of the three competencies that are remaining.

Slide 22

Instructor Notes:

- Review the definition of HR Expertise provided.
- Mention that another way to think of this competency is to think of it as basic HR knowledge. In other words, if there were a boot camp for HR, these are the types of knowledge participants would focus on during a basic training event.
- Point out that because this is a foundational competency it is very broad and less concrete than the nontechnical competencies, but it is still essential and critical to success early in one's HR career.

Slide 23

Instructor Notes:

- Remind the students that a subcompetency is related to the general competency, and may be subsumed by the general competency.
- Explain to the students that subcompetencies represent additional knowledge that leads to behaviors at the highest level of proficiency; they cut across career levels. Subcompetencies will give students a good understanding of what is expected of them out in the field.
- Ask the students to review the list of subcompetencies on the slide, and see who has experience with these subcompetencies. If someone in the class does have experience with one or more of these subcompetencies, have the person describe the subcompetency in more detail (or share some of his or her experiences working within this subcompetency).

Slide 24

Instructor Notes:

- Point out that "critical HR functions" (see the third bullet on the slide) include functions such as the following:
 - Strategy.
 - Workforce planning and talent management.
 - Training and development
 - Compensation and benefits.
 - Employee and labor relations.
 - Employment law.

- These are the same items that appear in the subcompetencies.

Slide 25

Instructor Notes:

- Understanding how the many thousands of SHRM members rated the importance of each competency will provide needed perspective to the students.
- Seeing the ratings is a useful career management tool, because it will help students understand what they need to master and the benefits of doing so, or the drawbacks of not doing so.

Slide 26

Instructor Notes:

- Taken from p. 138 of the book *Defining HR Success: 9 Critical Competencies for HR Professionals*.
- Review the slide.

Slide 27

Instructor Notes:

- The “Required Upon Entry” rating is also based on feedback from the surveyed SHRM members and tells students what they need to have mastered (mostly) by which stage of their career, again providing a roadmap for career advancement, a guide for future studies and perspective.

Slide 28

Instructor Notes:

- Taken from p. 138 of the book *Defining HR Success: 9 Critical Competencies for HR Professionals*.
- Stress as noted on the slide: You must already have this competency when you arrive at the respective level.

Slide 29

Instructor Notes:

- Taken from p. 141 of the book *Defining HR Success: 9 Critical Competencies for HR Professionals*.
- Give students a few moments to observe the table.
- Ask them for their observations.
 - If needed, point out the *huge* jump of the Importance and RUE scores from early to mid level and the gradual increase from mid level to senior level. Also look at the tiny dip in RUE from senior to executive.
- Ask, “What do these findings mean?”

- These findings indicate that recent college graduates can get an entry-level role, but they really need to focus on amassing a body of knowledge to move forward since this competency becomes more important later. And as for that tiny dip at the executive level? Executives are focused on higher-level organizational challenges and big-picture factors. They expect their teams to stay up-to-date on the minutiae of things like benefits enrollment, new Forms I-9, how to change payroll deductions in the HRIS and so on.
- Ask, “What happens if HR professionals are not proficient in this competency?”
 - Potential answer: HR professionals seen as lacking in HR Expertise/HR Knowledge, or as appearing not to have it in a job interview, will not be promoted or hired into the roles they want. This competency is the foundation of doing what organizations rely on HR professionals to do.

Slide 30

Instructor Notes:

- Have the students review the ideas for developing HR expertise that are on the slide.
- Encourage them to provide additional ideas for how to develop this competency.
- Remind them that the term *development* is not limited to formal training events. There are many informal ways to develop new skills, and about 70 percent of development should happen and generally does occur on the job.
- For example, on-the-job training can include mentoring, rotational assignments and special projects that exercise new skills.

Slide 31

Instructor Notes:

- Mention that after studying each of the four entry-level competencies, we will have an opportunity to consider its application in the real world.
- For HR expertise, the report *Evolution of Work and the Worker: Five Key Trends from SHRM's Special Expertise Panels* gives us a glimpse of the political, economic, social and technological changes that are occurring in the world that will profoundly change the nature of HR. Being aware of these changes and carefully considering how to respond is a cornerstone of having HR Expertise that an organization will value.

Materials for This Lesson:

- *Evolution of Work and the Worker: Five Key Trends from SHRM's Special Expertise Panels* available online at no cost from SHRM Foundation:

- <http://www.shrm.org/about/foundation/products/Documents/2015%20Evol%20of%20Work-Panel%20Report-FINAL.pdf>

Slide 32

Instructor Notes:

- Have the students take out *Evolution of Work and the Worker: Five Key Trends from SHRM's Special Expertise Panels*.
- Lead about a 15-minute discussion, using the questions provided on this and the next slide. If time is short, just select a few questions that you particularly like.

Slide 33

Instructor Notes:

- If time allows, spend a few minutes discussing the questions on the slides.
- It is usually best if you have the students initially form pairs and discuss the questions, and then lead a large-group discussion.

Slide 34

Instructors Note:

- Remind students of the assignments due next session—Relationship Management.
- See if there are any remaining questions from today's session.