



Competencies for Mid-Career HR Professionals
PPT—Session 5: Consultation
Instructor Notes

Slide 1 - Competencies for Mid-Career HR Professionals

- This session on Consultation is a continuation of a series following four early-career-level sessions and preceding three senior and executive career-level sessions. There is also a second mid level session to be completed covering Business Acumen.

Materials for This Session:

- SHRM HR Competency Model. If students would like to download this, it can be accessed at <https://www.shrm.org/learningandcareer/competency-model/pages/default.aspx>

SHRM's Research *Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs)*

- https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/trends-and-forecasting/research-and-surveys/Documents/SHRM_Survey_Findings_Strategic-Benefits-Flexible-Work-Arrangements.pdf

Slide 2 - Due This Session

- Review what is due today.
- Ask students if they have any questions about the content covered in the Session 4.

Slide 3 - Course Introduction and Consultation Competency

- Course intro.
- Ask students, “By a show of hands, how many of you completed the early-career module on the first four competencies of HR?”
 - The next slide will be an overview of the model for students who have not completed the early-career module. However, require them to review the four prior competencies as external self-study.
 - Ask the rest of the students to share some of the things they learned in the early-career module and how their perspective of the field of HR has changed.

- Ask students before covering today's content, "What do you think Consultation means?" (Revisit this during the wrap-up at the conclusion of the session.)
 - Tell them their perspective will evolve even further by the time they finish this module.

Slide 4 - Session 5: Lessons

- Review the lessons covered in today's session.
- Note: SHRM subject-matter experts carefully chose the content and activities for the two sessions. 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 copyright laws.
- Depending on how many optional activities you add, you may need to expand how much time is devoted to each of the two modules.

Slide 5 - Learning Objectives

- 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 students, "What do you hope to get out of these two mid-career sessions?"

Slide 6 - Course Purpose

- Review the course purpose on the slide.
- Point out that the two-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 two competencies that are most essential for mid level HR practitioners.
- Remind students that you already presented four sessions addressing early-career level competencies, and say that a senior and executive module will come soon.
- Mention that the course is geared toward graduate- and undergraduate-level students, because it is just an overview of the mid level competencies.
- You may choose to also mention that the two sessions we will cover are intended to be included in larger university programs (such as BBA programs).

Slide 7 - Overview of SHRM's Competency Model

- Ask students, “By a show of hands, how many of you completed the early-career module on the first four competencies of HR?”
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 - Ask the rest of the students to share some of the things they learned in the early-career module and how their perspective of the field of HR has changed.
- Ask students before covering today's content, “What do you think Consultation means?” (Revisit this during the wrap-up at the conclusion of the session.)
 - Tell them their perspective will evolve even further by the time they finish this module.

Slide 8 - SHRM Competency Model

- Review the SHRM Competency Model (we will present the definitions, descriptions and more information in other slides).
- 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 mid level HR professionals (Consultation and Business Acumen.)
- Remind students that these competencies are considered nontechnical, or behavioral, competencies.
- Remind them that technical competencies represent 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 9 - Levels of Experience

- Point out that this graphic depicts the career of an HR professional as he or she gains more experience.
- When explaining the graphic, tell students that the graphics with the number in them represent years of experience (e.g., Mid 3-7 denotes three to seven 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 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 10 - Course Structure

- Review the two sessions outlined on this slide.
- Remind students that the entire course is two 75-minute sessions. With time being limited, we will have to focus the content on high-level descriptions of the competencies, and we will present a few practical exercises to help them understand what these competencies look like in practice.
- The course also includes preparatory assignments for each session, which they should have already received and completed for Session 1.

Slide 11 - Importance of the Competency

- 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 12 - Importance Rating Scale

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

Slide 13 - Required Upon Entry (RUE)

- 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 14 - RUE Rating Scale

- 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 15 - Ratings

- Taken from p. 147 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 large jump in both the Importance and RUE scores from early to mid level and again from mid level to senior and executive levels.
- Ask, “What do these findings mean?”

- These findings indicate that HR professionals will need to begin developing this competency in the earliest stages in their careers, so they will be ready when they reach mid level.
- The findings also indicate that, whether it comes naturally or not, this is a skill they *must* develop to be successful in their roles at this level.
- Ask, “What happens if HR professionals are not proficient in this competency?”
 - Potential answer: HR professionals seen as lacking in Consultation, or as appearing not to have it in a job interview, may not be promoted or hired into the roles they want.
- Tell students: The SHRM Competency Model can be a helpful roadmap for your career and future studies, because you now know what you need and when you need it.
- Consider: These scores are relatively moderate at the mid-career level, but they continue to increase with the higher-career levels.

Slide 16 - Definition and Components of the Consultation Competency

- Ask students what impressions they have of the role of an internal consultant and what it means to provide consultation, now that they have completed the Consultation contemplation pre-session activity. Some typical responses may include:
 - You have to be able to make evaluations and judgments.
 - You need a broad perspective and an understanding of how things fit together.
 - You must be able to coach and advise using facts from research and interpreting them through experience.
 - You must be prepared not only to make a case for a course of action but also to be a leader of its implementation.
- Ask students to describe a person they have worked with whom they have seen play the role of internal consultant—whether or not the person had a consulting title or had worked in HR. Have them describe the specific tasks that person did that cast him or her in the role of internal consultant.

Slide 17 - Consultation Definition

- Review the definition provided.
- Elaborate on this information if you sense doing so is required for understanding.

Slide 18 - Consultation Description

- Review the description provided.

- Elaborate on this information if you sense doing so is required for understanding.

Slide 19 - Consultation Examples

- Review the examples provided.
- Elaborate on this information if you sense doing so is required for understanding.
- Have the students look over the examples provided, and ask them if they can think of other examples of how Consultation manifests itself in the workplace. Do not spend a lot of time on their examples, since you are about to review the subcompetencies and the behaviors, but ask them to revisit the person in the internal consultant role from the previous slide.
- Now that they have seen the formal definition, description and examples of the Consultation competency, ask them to share their reflections on that person.

Slide 20 - Consultation Subcompetencies

- Remind students that a subcompetency is related to the general competency and may be subsumed by the general competency.
- Choose a few of the subcompetencies on the slide that you think are particularly important to successfully acting as an internal consultant, and provide your perspective on why these are so important. For example:
 - For creativity and innovation, you might talk about how HR professionals should come up with new ideas or new versions of old ideas, while still considering the ideas' practicality.
 - For coaching, you can talk about the importance of helping your colleagues find solutions and reach goals, while not giving them answers or doing the work for them.
 - For inquisitiveness, you could talk about the importance of asking enough questions to fully understand the challenge the person you are assisting is facing. In addition, asking the person questions encourages him or her to reflect on the answer, allowing the person to possibly identify root causes and potential solutions.
 - For time management, you can ask why managing expectations and coordinating delivery dates and times is important.

Slide 21 - Consultation Behaviors

- Discuss the Consultation behaviors with the students.
- See if they can pick out a few of these behaviors that they feel are critical to successfully implement the subcompetencies. For example:
 - For career pathing/talent management/people management, they might point out that “serves as an in-house workforce and people management expert” and “guides employees regarding specific career situation” are two key behaviors that allow HR professionals to be successful.
- *As an alternative (if time allows)*, you could also turn this into a quick activity. Before class, print out the list of behaviors, and cut the page into strips with one behavior on each strip. Place the strips into a bowl. There are six behaviors, so ask for six volunteers. Have each draw a behavior

from the bowl. Have each volunteer read the behavior out loud and then match it to one of the subcompetencies (it would help if you flip back to the subcompetency slide for this part of the activity). Once students pair the behavior they chose with a subcompetency, ask the rest of the class if that behavior could also support other subcompetencies.

- Continue until all six students have matched their behaviors to at least one subcompetency.
- *An accelerated version* of this is to have two or three students pick a behavior from the bowl, not covering all the behaviors.

Slide 22 - Ways to Develop Consultation Skills

- Have the students review the ideas on the slide for developing Consultation skills.
- Encourage them to provide additional ideas for how to develop skills to master this competency.
- Point out that items 3, 4 and 5 are based on communication and questioning.
- Then ask two to three students to provide examples of questions to ask to clarify and ensure understanding of problems. Some possible answers are:
 - What have you already tried to resolve this issue?
 - Can you give me a specific example of what you mean?
 - Do I understand correctly that you're saying . . . ?

Slide 23 - Application of the Consultation Competency

- Begin by asking the students what they think of when they hear the word Consultation. Some typical responses may include:
 - Providing advice.
 - Providing a second opinion.
 - Providing an objective/neutral outlook.
- Next, ask the students to describe a person they have worked with who exemplifies being an effective internal consultant (the person does not necessarily have to work in HR). Have them describe the specific things the consultant did to show his or her willingness *and* ability to consult. How did the person approach others to initiate the consultation? What did the person do to maintain momentum?

Slide 24 - Activity

- Refer to the document “Applying the Consultation Competency.”
- Hand out copies to each student.
- Students should have completed the prereading of the SHRM research *Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs)*.
- If students are not already assigned to small groups (approximately four to six each), assign them now.
- While only two students play active roles (as the HR manager and museum curator), remind the others that they must observe closely and provide valuable feedback at the end. Be sure they take notes, and tell them that noting specific statements and responses will help when making points or suggestions.

- Tell students to try to be realistic and to consider solutions that will work in a museum environment. Some ideas work great in one environment but fail in another.
- Circulate unobtrusively during the exercise, and make observations to comment on during the wrap-up.
- Try not to get involved in the conversation. Let it happen. Everyone will share after.

The following tips may help the students playing the roles of HR manager and museum curator:

HR Manager:

- The HR manager should give valuable information to the manager without trying to prove his or her knowledge. The consultant must strike a fine balance between sharing information to educate and assist someone versus drowning the person in information that is not necessarily actionable or applicable.
- To understand the problem, the HR manager needs to ask and listen more than speak. Some people are tempted to rush in and save the day, but they do not know what they are trying to save until they ask the right questions and listen.
- The HR manager should offer multiple solutions, not just one. In this way, the consultant and curator can collaborate as partners to find the best solution; plus, sometimes new solutions come from combining or revising old ideas.

Museum Curator:

- The curator is part of the process and should not expect the HR manager to solve the problem. Remember the old adage “If you aren’t part of the solution, then you are part of the problem.”
- The curator should not just accept what the HR manager tells him or her, but rather ask for the details about the solution (e.g., how?, why?). That is how good dialog happens.
- The HR manager should ask questions, but if he or she does not, the curator should volunteer information. Keeping your HR support well informed helps HR give you good advice. Holding back only hurts *you*.

Remaining Students:

- Their classmates will be learning from them!
- They can’t just relax
- Ask them the questions on the applying the competency exercise outline.

Slide 25 – Activity: Debrief

- Ask the questions on the slide to people who played each role.
- First the “HR managers.”
- Then the “curators.”
- Then the “observers.”
- Then share your own observations with the class.
- Refer back to the SHRM research *Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs)* document.

- Did students make good use of the content?
 - What was used most?
 - What was used least?

Slide 26 - Rapid Recap

- Recap the key points about the Consultation competency as outlined on the slide.
- Ask, “Now that we’ve learned more about Consultation, what do you think it means?”
- Ask, “How has your perspective changed?”
- Ask, “What have you gained a new appreciation for?”
- Ask, “Did anything cause you to be skeptical?”

Slide 27 - Benefits, Challenges and Risks

- Review the benefits, challenges and risks as outlined on the slide.
- As you cover these, address each in the context of the individual, the HR department and the organization as a whole. Students should attempt to look at each competency using these three perspectives as best they can at this point in their education/career.
- Doing this exercise helps students consider the following:
 - Their HR career roadmap.
 - How they would lead and develop an HR department/team.
 - How they would contribute to an organization as a true business partner.

Slide 28 - Weaknesses

- Review the impact that weakness in this competency can have, as outlined on the slide.

Slide 29 - Due Next Session

- Remind students of the assignments due for the next session on Business Acumen.
- Ask if they have any remaining questions from today’s session.