

Listen to part of a lecture for MBA students called 'Competencies: Important for the business and the individual', about how competencies are used in Human Resources and how individuals can use competencies to their advantage.

Optional exercise Listen to the audio. Which four topics did the speaker mention? (Answers below).

- 1 Competencies are personal.
 - 2 Women and men have different competencies.
 - 3 Businessmen are out to make money.
 - 4 Clients insist on knowing the competencies of their employees.
 - 5 Completing your job successfully is not enough.
 - 6 You should include at least ten competencies on your CV.
 - 7 Line managers should help you define your competencies.
 - 8 Sometimes a person is misplaced in an organization.
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Today's lecture is called "Competencies: Important for the business and the individual". I'm going to give you a brief introduction first. Then I'll look at competencies from a business perspective, showing how HR uses them to make the business more efficient. After that we'll look at how competencies can help individuals. I'll make a few short points to sum up and then, if there's time I'll answer any questions that you might have.

"Competencies" is a buzz word today. When I started working in the world of business competencies were unheard of. They existed of course, but we hadn't given them a name and we certainly didn't divide them and sub-divide them in the way that we do today. A competency is a personal characteristic that describes what you do well – and usually – what you do **better** than everyone around you. Everybody is good at something so everybody has competencies. What's important is how we use them – both at a business level and as individuals.

Businesses exist to make money. The goal of people who run businesses is to increase productivity and make more money. Over recent years organisations have seen the benefits of using competencies for Human Resource management purposes. In the past we used to focus on whether or not a worker was successfully completing his or her work activities. If the answer was "yes" then everything was ok. But sometimes a worker will successfully complete his activities without affecting outputs or results at all.

What's the point in that? Where's that going to get the company? – Or the employee for that matter!

Organisations need to give their clients or customers exactly what they want. They need results.

When competencies are tied to the organization's culture they enable them to achieve their full potential. If results are clearly defined then it's easy to identify the competencies needed to achieve them. HR departments spend a lot of time and effort on identifying the competencies that are required in order to achieve the results that are desirable. And then they spend more time finding the individual or individuals who are able to demonstrate that they already possess those competencies. Sometimes the appropriate candidate is already working for the company but in the wrong department. Sometimes HR has to look outside the organization to find the best man – or woman – for the job.

As an individual – whether you are working or looking for a job – it's essential that you are able to identify your own competencies so that the people in the right places know that you are a potential candidate – or indeed the best candidate for the job.

It's a two-sided thing. If you don't identify specific competencies and let people know that you have them, then how will HR know that you are the right person for the job? If you are looking for a job then you need to be very careful about which competencies you include in the CVs you are sending out. If you are already inside a company but want to move on – or up – then you have to make sure your direct line managers are fully aware of any competencies that you have developed since the last time they looked.

Answers: 1,3,5,8