



TALENT
SPOKEN WITH
ONE VOICE



LEADERS | MANAGERS | PROFESSIONALS



TALENT SPOKEN WITH ONE VOICE

The essential ingredient in exceptional organizations is exceptional talent, but how do you identify it? What valid *criteria* define roles, help evaluate candidates and successors, and establish training goals?

COMPETENCY MODELING

The current best practice endorsed by virtually all major professional organizations is the concept of a competency model—the architectural framework that lays out a collection of specific behaviors, i.e., *competencies*, that are known to describe high-performers in a given role.

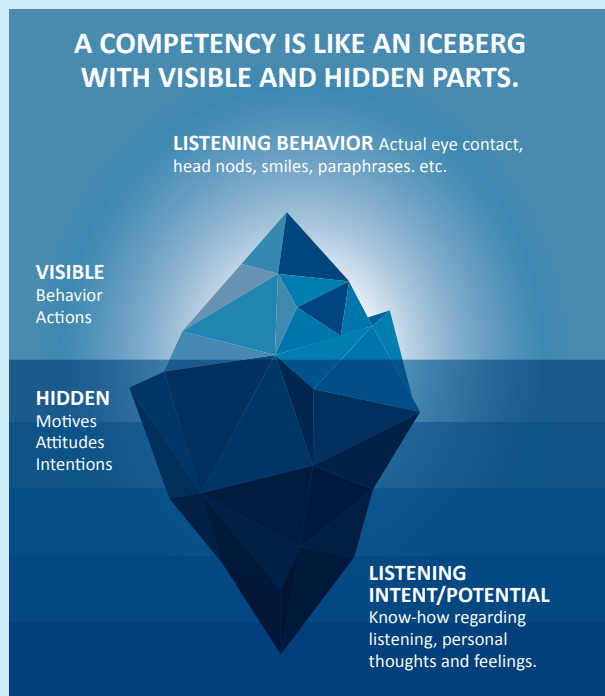
Together, they define the performance needed to produce clear communication, good judgment, trusting relationships, efficient use of resources, insightful strategy, and profitable products and services. They tell an independent observer what competence looks like in that role.

DEVELOPING COMPETENCY MODELS

For more than 40 years, Organization Systems International (OSI) has been building competency models in hundreds of

organizations, including private companies like Nike, Inc. and The Walt Disney Company, and public sector organizations like the U.S. Department of Energy and San Diego Community College District. The process involved interviewing thousands of high-performing leaders, sales and marketing professionals, customer service representatives and professional staff (IT, HR, Legal, QC, faculty, etc.). It also included comprehensive literature reviews plus content and criterion-related validity studies on the application of competencies.

Very early on, OSI noticed distinct features common to high performers: they were good communicators, made reliably good decisions, and were persuasive, efficient and trusted by co-workers. These individual competencies became the foundation for the emerging Polaris® Competency Model.



OSI'S POLARIS® COMPETENCY MODEL

After more than two decades of research and review OSI released Polaris®, a proprietary competency model that forms the basis for a variety of HR applications. It is at the core of OSI's Star Select® Interview program, and the standard for thousands of assessment centers used to select sales professionals, sales managers, marketing professionals, first-line

production supervisors and strategic leaders. It is also the foundation for the 360° multi-rater survey process which has supported the growth of thousands of professionals. OSI's Polaris® Competency Model has served as the instructional structure for hundreds of leadership development workshop series and simulation-based programs.

Polaris® Competency Model	
COMMUNICATIONS How You Show Up: Speak, Listen, Write, Orate	LEADERSHIP Direct and Inspire
CONCEPTUAL Intellect, Judgement, and Creativity	MANAGEMENT Efficient with Time, Talent and Resources
CONTEXTUAL Expertise: Jobs, Company, Industry, Market	PERSONAL Fundamentally Trustworthy, Well-Adjusted, Conscientious; Sound Individual
INTERPERSONAL Work Well on a Team, Emotionally Intelligent	

POLARIS®—WELL-RESEARCHED, PRACTICAL AND CUSTOMIZABLE

[Longitudinal research supporting the Polaris® Competency Model](#) has proven that the 41 competencies persist over time regardless of the cyclical nature of talent management. Most recently, a 2021 study conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic revalidated the entire model while revealing a shift in the emphasis of certain competencies for those leading remote/hybrid teams.

Practitioners have frequently commented that because Polaris® was primarily derived from the world of selection research, the edges of Polaris® competencies are sharper and more behaviorally

defined. This has resulted in competencies that are more practical and easier to understand and use.

Polaris® is also easily tailored to an organization through our well-developed customization process. A brief comparison with an organization's current high performers informs possible shifts in vocabulary and inflection. And our content validation process helps sort competencies by level and function to further identify subsets for use across talent management systems/tools like job descriptions, training, career planning and promotion decisions.

OUR CUSTOMERS TELL US THEY USE POLARIS®

- **Polaris® provides a common language to manage talent.** A core set of common criteria enable the integration and synergizing of hiring, promotion, appraisal and training. In the absence of a shared criteria, different descriptions of the ideal employee/leader tend to evolve, and, at worse, managers simply hire and develop clones of themselves or fragmented systems may cancel each other out.
- **Polaris® allows us to be deliberate about our leadership practices.** What leaders do primarily define an organization's culture, for better or worse, good or ill. Polaris® provides a vocabulary to set expectations for leadership behavior that matches cultural expectations.
- **Polaris® provides valid hiring/promotion criteria that are legally defensible, promote diversity, and provide a foundation for ROI research.**
- **Polaris® provides a credible way to engage new generations of employees in hiring and promotion, thus improving retention.** A competency model implies a concern for growth and development.

Return on investment has been proven again and again when organizations apply structured processes that use validated criteria such as interviews, assessment centers, succession management, and learning and development.

For example, a well-designed hiring interview using valid criteria and behavioral episode questions can provide a 380% return on

investment¹. Likewise, a study on survey-guided leadership development demonstrated ROI over 200% as a best practice process². The structure referred to in these processes must include valid criteria—such as a well-researched competency model—to provide the valid foundation for employee hiring, promotion, appraisal and training.

1. *The ROI of Behavioral Interviewing* by [Patrick Hauenstein, Ph.D.](#), posted in [Interviewing](#), April 4, 2013

2. *Bottom-Line Organization Development* by Dr. Merrill C. Anderson, Butterworth-Heinemann Publishers, 2003



SPECIALISTS IN TALENT SOLUTIONS IN LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

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