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How to Use Competency-Based Hiring for Internal Candidates

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When was the last time you learned something unexpected about a colleague? Perhaps your office manager is a lead singer in a local band. Or your accountant loves to skydive. We've all had these moments of delight when discovering surprise experiences and talents in others.

Now, imagine what it would be like if your organization intentionally, systematically discovered the hidden skills, talents, and experience of your workforce. It would be a delightful exercise. It's also smart business!



In this tight labor market, some HR leaders are redoubling initiatives to capture and develop the skills of their employees – so they can identify competent employees who may be a great match to fill open job roles. Here's how a competency-based approach to hiring can help with recruiting internal candidates.

Start with Skills-based Job Descriptions

To find qualified job candidates, whether from inside your company or in a wider talent pool, it's important to identify the skills they need to do the job. In job descriptions, focus on the skills that produce the *outcomes* expected for each position, rather than work and educational backgrounds.

As Avilar's CEO, Tom Grobicki, has previously commented, an increasing number of businesses and government organizations recognize that a college degree, "doesn't necessarily reflect one's skills or ability to succeed in a job. Nor does requiring a college degree give employers access to the best talent pool."

Prioritizing skills over education and work histories to evaluate candidates can help

level the playing fields – and help you identify talent already on your payroll as a potential fit for open positions.

Keep Your Workforce Skills Assessments Current

Using competency management, you can find hidden candidates already on your payroll. To fully consider current employees for new job openings, you do need to know who has the skills and competencies you need – even if they aren't using them in their current role. If we only consider how well employees are performing their jobs today, it's too easy to overlook skills and experiences they've developed outside their current role.

Competency-driven organizations routinely update their competency models with the skills and competencies needed as leadership best practices evolve, job

demands change, and future roles and skills are identified. Conducting [skills assessments](#) gives employees, managers, and leadership excellent feedback about where the workforce shines – and where there are gaps.

Your up-to-date competency database is a treasure trove of information and insights that can inform big, strategic decisions as well as smaller, individual feedback and plans.

Using a competency-based approach, you can find hidden candidates already on your payroll. To fully consider current employees for new job openings, you first need to know who has the skills and competencies you need – even if they aren't using them in their current role. If we only consider how well employees are performing their jobs today, it's too easy to overlook skills and experiences they've developed outside their current role.

Promote Job Openings to Employees First

Workers may not realize that the skills they have for one job can be transferred to others. Announcing job openings to employees, first, and emphasizing skills is a winning proposition for many reasons:

1) Transparency: Employees have more respect for companies that practice “transparency.” Communicating first to employees is one way to clearly share what’s happening now.

2) Engagement: Encouraging employees to apply for jobs – or refer friends or colleagues to apply – also invites employees to engage with the company, to be part of the solution.

3) Talent: Sharing open positions with a message that *all* interested employees are invited to apply opens doors for potential candidates across your company.

Reaching out to employees, first, will accelerate finding and hiring internal candidates.

Encourage and Celebrate Reassignments

Recognizing employees for their skills and competencies – beyond their current roles – can be a game-changer. After all, every internal reassignment is a huge win for both the employee and the company.

Employees selected for new positions at your company get new opportunities, the same great benefits, faster time to competency – all without changing locations or leaving the people and culture they already know and love. They are happier because they’ve been recognized for their contributions and given a chance to grow.

Your company eliminates recruiting costs for those positions. There’s no employee relocation costs. You’re minimizing all those risks associated with bringing a new person on board. You don’t have to wonder: Will they be a fit for the culture? Do they work hard? Are they collaborative? And current employees will have the skills and knowledge to fill some of the higher-level jobs, so you get to backfill their roles with more entry-level talent.

Work with your managers to recognize employee contributions today AND to help map out potential career paths and next steps based on employees' skills and interests. Encourage managers to support and encourage their team members who apply for open positions elsewhere in the company.

Reinforce a Culture of Continuous Learning and Development

“At a time when talent is the number-one commodity in business, companies can't afford to remain stuck in old mindsets,” says LinkedIn CEO, Ryan Rolansky, in this [Harvard Business Review article](#) on a skills-based approach to hiring and developing talent. He advises, “keep your employees engaged and your company ready to adapt to changing demands by creating a culture of learning. It's how we'll start hiring and developing talent for the future, not the past.”

Large and small businesses adopted [reskilling and upskilling](#) initiatives to quickly adapt to changing business demands and priorities during the pandemic. Now, as you embrace your current workforce as a key future talent pool, your culture of continuous learning and development takes on new meaning. By training today's workers you're also developing the skills of your future employees – whether they stay in their current role or get reassigned to a new position in the company.

In today's progressive world, employees shouldn't have to change employers to get ahead. And businesses don't have to keep finding new great employees to fill open positions. By identifying, celebrating, harnessing, and developing the skills of your current workers, you're building a

sustainable talent pipeline for current and future jobs.

Are you interested in identifying uncovered skills and talent in your current workforce? [Contact us](#) today to find out how [WebMentor Skills™](#) and Avilar's experienced team of professionals may be able to support your next steps.

About Avilar

Avilar – The Competency Company™ is a leader in web-based competency management and learning solutions for corporations, government, and non-profit organizations. Formed in 1997, Avilar was a pioneer with its award-winning WebMentor™ product line and has built itself on the basis of superior customer service and highly adaptable product design.

Avilar consultants are recognized as industry thought leaders and have decades of experience in implementation and analysis. You can be confident that we will listen to your organization's specific needs and help you find the best solutions to the talent management challenges you're facing. Let Avilar help you transform your organization from **ordinary to extraordinary!**