PERENNIAL TALENT

THE 3-STEPS STRATEGY

My Clients Use to Hire, Engage, And
Retain the Best People

TABLE OF CONTENT

WHO THIS IS
ARTICLE FOR

This article is for HR professionals (e.g., HR business partners, organizational effectiveness managers, work design experts, hiring managers) who want to improve the transparency and objectivity of how successful performance is defined for roles across their organization so that they can effectively hire, engage, and keep the right people in the right roles.

WHAT YOU
WILL LEARN

- The step-by-step strategy our clients use to describe successful performance so they can consistently hire, engage, and retain the right people for the right roles.
- The secret to defining successful job performance in a clear and objective way using skills/competencies.
- How our clients save time using our method and get rid of the frustration of doing it in-house.
- How skills can be used to hire, engage, and retain people with the right skills.

DOES THIS SOUND
LIKE YOU?

01 Do you have a continuous need to competitively hire and develop people with the right skills?

02 Are you frustrated that you spend time and money on hiring, only for people to end up leaving your organization?

03 Do you have a clear sense of what skills people need across the different roles?

04 Do you find it challenging to fill positions internally with people in-house?

05 Do you find that you need a consistent and objective way to define the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for successful job performance?

06 Are people leaving your organization because they don't have a defined career path or learning plan in place?

07 Did your department or organization spend time defining skills/competencies, only for no one to use them?

If any of the above sounds like you, then we have good news. None of those things are the real problem. **They are just symptoms.**

THE REAL
PROBLEM

The real problem is that you haven't made what Perennial Talent calls "the shifts." Once you make them you will have the knowledge, tools, and exact playbook you can apply so that you can consistently hire, engage, and retain people with the right skills for the right roles.

WHO
WE ARE

Before we go much further, let me take a moment to introduce Perennial Talent Inc. so you have a better sense of who we are and why we speak from experience.

Perennial Talent has worked with organizations around the world to help them better understand how to find, select, engage, and keep the best people. With over 60 years of combined experience, our team of industrial-organizational psychology practitioners and HR specialists have helped clients to define both the technical skills/competencies (e.g., project management, cybersecurity monitoring and reporting, incident analysis and response) and the transferable skills/competencies (e.g., adaptability, communication, analytical thinking) needed for successful job performance. Then, we have helped these same clients to apply these skills/competencies to the full talent life cycle

(e.g., hiring, onboarding, learning and development, career development).

We know EXACTLY what it's like to be in your shoes. Over the last decade, we have helped clients across 20+ industries define the skills/competencies needed for success and use them to hire, engage, and keep the right people for the right roles.

At Perennial Talent, we specialize in helping HR and other professionals to eliminate ambiguity and subjectivity and define the skills/competencies needed for successful performance.

And we have learned that there are 3 key shifts you must make to be able to hire, engage and retain the right people with the right skills.

IDENTIFY WHAT YOU NEED TO BUILD
BEFORE YOU BUILD IT

HR and technology leaders currently cite identifying and building critical competencies or skills as the number one priority for their organization.[1] Technological advances and a need for more remote work are just some of the changes that affect roles and how work gets done. As the world of work continues to evolve, the need for competencies or skills will continue to grow. Organizations need to ensure that employees have the right competencies or skills needed for their current jobs as well as the jobs of the future. A recent survey found that 40% of HR leaders did not know what skills their people possessed.[2] And what's worse, only one in five employees say they have the skills needed for success in their current job and the skills needed for their future jobs.[3]

Having the right people with the right skills in the right roles is critical for areas such as cybersecurity because it can help you to protect your organization's proprietary data and more importantly, the organization's reputation.[4] In order to thrive, organizations need to take the time to define the

---

[1] Gartner Inc. (2020). Top five priorities for HR leaders in 2020.
[2] Mercer (2020). Global Talent Trends 2020: Executive Summary.
[3] Gartner Inc. (2020). Top five priorities for HR leaders in 2020.
[4] McAfee Center for Strategic and International Initiatives (2016). Hacking the skills shortage.

competencies or skills needed for success across all roles. By describing it, you can measure it and make better hires, onboard people, manage their performance, and help them to learn and to grow, while navigating their own career paths.

Competencies or skills provide a common language that help to define what a person must be able to know and do to be successful in their job. They describe observable behaviours and should answer the question, "how do I know it when I see it"? They refer to a cluster of related knowledge, skills, abilities, or other characteristics defined in terms of the observable behaviours needed for success. When describing the skills needed for successful performance you will need to build a skill profile, which describes the critical 6 to 8 skills and behaviours needed for successful performance for a given role.

To create skill profiles, one of the very first things you must do is create a skill framework. We have seen a number of competency/skill projects fail because people do not take the time to outline this framework or what they are building before they start. We always say you would not build a house without first having a blueprint in place, competency/skill projects are no different. This skills framework is important because it allows you to build skill profiles in a consistent way so that they are easier to communicate and to ultimately use.

There are **five Skill Benchmarks or decisions** you must consider when building your skills framework:

1 Structure of a Skill:
What will the skills you are using to define your jobs look like?

Now is the time to review what you may already be using and determine if it is working. Are you currently using skills throughout the organization? If yes, what do they look like? Do they follow best practice?

- Does each skill have a clear definition?
- Do the skills describe successful performance using multiple-levels or stages of behaviours?
- Are the behaviours listed for each skill observable (i.e., would you know it when you see it)?

One important tip to keep in mind is that the best skills are those that describe successful performance using multiple stages or levels. Multi-stage or multi-level skills allow you to describe what successful performance looks like at various stages or levels of learning or proficiency, from someone still learning the skill or ability to someone with vast expertise in the skill or ability. By using multi-stage or multi-level skills, you can use the same skill to describe many different jobs across your area or organization. This allows an employee and their manager to understand what they may need to work on if they wish to not only be successful in their current role but also any other role that they may wish to move into.

Below, we provide an example of a good multi-level/multi-stage skill.

1. Name

2. Definition

Continous Learning: Shows a commitment to learning and developing knowledge, skills, and abilities.

4. Stages

3. Key Areas

5. Example Behaviors

Key Areas	Stages			
	Developing	**Intermediate**	**Advanced**	**Mastery**
Reflects on capabilities	Identifies own strengths and areas in need of development.	Gathers feedback from others regularity to clarify learning needs.	Analyses successes and failures on a continous basis to identify areas to improve.	Measures current skills and knowledge against requirements needed to meet long-term goals.
Sets learning goals	Creates challenging and realistic learning goals.	Monitors progress towards meeting learning goals, updating approach as required.	Sets challenging long-term goals that are outside of area of expertise.	Provides guidance to others on how to set realistic and challenging goals.
Identifies learning opportunities	Identifies own learning style and preferences for learning.	Identifies as variety of learning activities needed to enhance capabilities.	Seeks out challenging and unfamiliar learning opportunities.	Pursues development activities needed to meet future and emerging industry trends.
Applies learning	Stays up to date on new trends or best practices relevant to own area.	Tries new ways of doing things, adjusting approach based on lessons learned.	Shares knowledge and resources with others to facilitate continous improvement.	Seeks new tools and techniques to facilitate continous learning.

2 Types of Skills:
Which types of skills will use in your skill profiles?

There are four main types of skills that can be used to describe successful job performance for the roles within your area and organization. These four types of skills can be used in any combination to describe the roles. For example, some organizations who are implementing skills for the first time may opt to only use core skills for now, in an effort to align all employees to the organizations core values. Organizations with a more sophisticated skills framework may use a combination of all four types of skills.

The four types include:

Core

apply to every job within the organization and are often linked to the vision and/or values of the organization.

Example: If being innovative and creative is a critical value for the organization, innovation may be a core skill that is essential for every role across the entire organization and would be found in each skill profile. These skills also help to link all employees' behaviour to the goals of the organization.

Job Specific

apply to a specific job or subset of jobs.

Example: An Information Security Analyst role could require a Threat Management skill, whereas an Incident Response Analyst role might not require Threat Management but perhaps an Incident Response and Analysis skill instead.

Job Family

apply to a subset or grouping of jobs within the organization that share a common function or logical career stream.

Example: An Incident Response job family could include the skill analytical thinking as a job family skill because analytical thinking is critical to all jobs within the Incident Response job family.

Leadership

apply to roles with leadership responsibilities.

Example: Leaders often need to set and implement strategy and help their people to grow and develop, so they may need skills such as strategic thinking and developing others.

3 Job Families and Profiles:

How many job families will you have and how many skill profiles will you build within each job family?

Job families are important because they allow you to organize your jobs, arrange your career streams and career paths, and make skill profiling easier. Job families describe a collection or group of jobs that share a similar function (e.g., HR job family, Sales job family, Vulnerability and Threat Management job family, Infrastructure Security job family, etc.) and form a logical career path.

To identify job families, you can:

- Review data and information that your organization may have already collected (e.g., job descriptions, organizational charts) to see which jobs share common duties and how jobs relate to one another.
- Consider industry frameworks that may describe the different types of jobs and how they should be grouped. For example, if you were looking to identify job families within the cybersecurity industry, you would want to refer to the National Initiative for Cybersecurity Education (NICE) workforce framework as it describes how jobs can be grouped based on the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for successful performance.
- Talk to the experts. Go to the source and speak with someone in your organization, a subject matter expert, who has a deep understanding of the area and the jobs you are trying to describe. This person can help you to understand which jobs share similar knowledge, skills, and abilities and serve a common function.

To Identify which skill profiles in a job family you will build, you can:

- Identify how your roles within the various job families will be structured (e.g., entry, intermediate, senior; analyst, senior analyst, professional, expert; professional levels; band levels, etc.). You may also wish to use any job bands or levels you already have in place.
- Map your jobs to the skill profiles you will build (e.g., three jobs: cyber controls assurance analyst, security specialist, and cyber security analyst may map to one skill profile: vulnerability and threat assessment analyst).

4 Leadership Skills:
How will you include leadership roles and skills in your framework?

Leadership skills apply to roles with leadership responsibilities. These skills define behaviours that focus on what it takes to provide vision, set strategy, act with integrity, and help support others to set and reach their goals. Typically, smaller organizations where leaders are highly involved in the day-to-day operations treat leadership skills as job specific skills, whereas larger organizations interested in developing a cadre of leaders treat leadership skills as job family skills.

5 Number of Skills per Skill Profile:
How many skills will you include in one skill profile?

6-8 is ideal. Definitely no more than 10. It's difficult to identify every single requirement for a job, so you should focus on the most critical behaviours needed for successful performance or those make or break behaviours. Again, it is about identifying the "must haves" as opposed to the "nice to have." We recommend using no more than 6-8 skills to describe a job. This way, there are enough skills to describe the job accurately, but not too many to make HR applications impractical (imagine hiring based on 15 key skills or having

your managers rate employees on 15 things!).

Below we provide some more specific recommendation in terms of numbers of skills to include in a skill profile by skill type:

Type of Skill	Number of Skills
Core	2
Job Family	2
Job Specific	2 to 4

As you decide on your Skill Framework by working through each of the five Skill Benchmarks, it is also important to establish a project governance structure at the start of your project that outlines the roles and responsibilities of the various working groups and individuals. Like any other project, you will also need to develop a project plan and prepare a risk management plan. Part of your competency/skill project involves changing how the organization approaches the management of your people, so it important to manage the people side of this change by developing a change management plan. Throughout every phase of your project, communication is the cornerstone and critical to the success of the project. A well-thought out communication plan will help you to not only manage resistance but generate awareness and support for the project. Lastly, it is important to think about measures you can use to show the success of your project.

STICK TO THE PLAN

WHEN BUILDING
SKILL PROFILES

Once your Skill Framework is in place and your job families are identified, you can begin building skill profiles. We recommend starting with a pilot group so that you can tailor the process to your needs and optimize it as you go. Start with one job family of about 6 roles or skill profiles.

To help you get a sense of what you are building, we have provided two example skill profiles. One for an Analyst and one for a Sr. Analyst within the job family, "Vulnerability and Threat Assessment and Management."

Analyst		Sr. Analyst	
Skill	**Stage/Level of proficiency**	**Skill**	**Stage/Level of proficiency**
Cyber Security Monitor and Reporting	Int. (2)	Cyber Security Monitoring and Reporting	Adv. (3)
Threat Management	Dev. (1)	Threat Management	Int. (2)
Risk Assessment	Dev. (1)	Risk Management	Int. (2)
Adaptability	Int. (2)	Adaptability	Adv. (3)
Problem Solving	Int. (2)	Problem Solving	Adv. (3)
Strategic Advice	NA	Strategic Advice	Int. (2)

Problem Solving - Defines the problem and identifies, evaluates, and implements a solution to resolve the issue.
Advanced - Deals with complexity: Applies the skill in the new or ambiguous situations.
· Identifies patterns and trends related to the problem.
· Develops solutions for problems for which information is missing or conflicting.
· Evaluates impacts, risks, obstacles, and benefits before choosing a solution.
· Adjusts solution or approach to address changes to the problem,

The general steps for building skill profiles like the two examples provided above, include:

1 Identify 2-4 subject matter experts per job family

You will need to engage subject matter experts (SMEs) to pick the most critical skills. SMEs should have a deep understanding of the requirements of the role(s). They should be representative and fully cover all aspects of the role(s) you are profiling (e.g., geography, function, years of experience). They should also be credible and respected within the organization to build more buy-in for the initiative. You will need to identify 2-4 SMEs per job family.

2 Identify skills and stage of development/level of skill proficiency

The first step in identifying skills is to create a shortlist of potential skills. It helps to narrow down the list of potential skills rather than using an entire skill dictionary/library/catalogue. We recommend starting with a shortlist of about 10-12 skills.

Next, you can engage the 2-4 SMEs during an in-person or virtual focus group to select the 6-8 most critical skills and stage of development/level of skill proficiency for each role.

Below are some tips that the SMEs should consider when selecting skills:

- Focus on minimum performance requirements, not "all-star" performers.
- Think about the role, not the person. E.g., Don't think about a specific person within a role, think about the role more broadly so that it can apply to any person currently in the role or who will be in the role in the future.

Also, don't forget to take notes on the rationale for why the assigned skill and stage of development/level of skill proficiency makes sense for each profile. These notes will be useful when validating the skill profiles and make the skill profiles more legally defensible.

3 Validate the skill profiles

The final step of building skill profiles is to conduct a validation session to ensure that the skills and the stages of development or levels of skill proficiency are accurate. Think of it as a double check to ensure you got things right. To validate the skill profiles, it is often helpful to bring in a second group of 1-2 subject matter experts and have them confirm that the profiles accurately reflect the critical requirements for the job, and that there are no missing skills. One additional benefit of validation is that it allows you to engage additional stakeholders to build buy-in for the project.

SHIFT 3

USE THEM OR LOSE THEM:

START USING THE SKILL PROFILES

One common mistake that people make is that they wait to start using their skill profiles until they have developed skill profiles for the entire department/area or even the organization. Don't wait! Once they are built, you can begin to use them to help hire the best people, onboard them, manage their performance, and help them to learn and to grow, while navigating their own career paths. Skill profiles become the bridge that link all your HR processes and programs together.

Hiring

Once defined, you will need to identify tools that you can use to measure or assess the behaviours listed in the skill profiles. For hiring, this can mean using tools such as behavioural-based interview questions. Behavioural-based interview questions ask a candidate to describe how they have acted or behaved in a specific situation in the past. This is a useful strategy because the best predictor of future success is past success. These questions are linked to the skills that are tied to the requirements for successful performance on the job. Each candidate is asked the same questions to ensure consistency and fairness of the interview. Interview questions based on the skill profiles allow you to objectively measure how well a person's skills fit the job. Using these types of questions will help to minimize the cost of a bad hire for which the average cost can be more than $18,700 per employee.[5] Organizations with mature talent management programs, including skill profiles, are more likely to minimize these costs and are in fact 2.4 time more likely to select the right candidate with the right skills for the right job.[6]

---

[5] CareerBuilder (2019). CareerBuilder's annual survey reveals hot hiring and recruitment trends for 2019
[6] Bersin by Deloitte, Deloitte Consulting LLP (2018). Talent matters: How well-designed talent experience can drive growth in emerging markets.

Learning and Development

Another great way to start using your skill profiles is to integrate them into your learning and development program. You can develop assessments tied to the skill profiles, so that employees and managers have a clear understanding of the employees' strengths and areas in need of development. Assessment results can be linked to learning and development opportunities tied to skills. This helps to create a culture of learning and performance feedback. Organizations with a culture of learning and development see increases in revenue up to 70%.[7]

Career Development and Career Pathing

Skill profiles can also be used for career development. Employees can not only assess themselves against the skills required for their current job but they can also assess themselves against the skills required for any job they would like to move into. Providing employees with career development opportunites reduces recruiting costs and increases an employee's willingness to stay with their organization by a much as 94%.[8] Not only that, 60% of employers report that employees promoted and developed internally perform better than employees that are hired outside the organizaiton for similar positions.[9]

Overall, by integrating skill profiles into your HR processes you can consistently hire, engage, and retain people with the right skills in the right roles. In fact, organizations with skill profiles in place are:

37% more likely to have increased employee engagement;[10]

40% lower turnover across high performers;[11]

45% more likely to have increased customer retention;[12]

55% more likely to have increased revenue over last year;[13]

41% more likely to have increased market penetration;[14] and

92% more likely to be able to respond to evolving economic conditions.[15]

[7] Brandon Hall Group (2014). The value of ongoing performance management.
[8] LinkedIn Learning (2018). 2018 Workplace learning report.
[9] SHRM Foundation (2015). Weighing internal versus external hires.
[10] Brandon Hall Group (2017). Great ROI awaits investors in competency management.
[11] Bersin & Associates (2012). Integrated talent management: A roadmap for success.
[12] Brandon Hall Group (2017). Great ROI awaits investors in competency management.
[13] Brandon Hall Group (2017). Great ROI awaits investors in competency management.
[14] Brandon Hall Group (2017). Great ROI awaits investors in competency management.
[15] Bersin & Associates (2012). Integrated talent management: A roadmap for success.

CLIENT CASE STUDY:

LARGE FINANCIAL INSTITUTION

A large financial institution was finding it hard to keep up with the need to continuously hire and develop people with the right skills to manage cyber security and IT risks. They struggled to find people with the right transferable skills (i.e., skills that apply to more than one industry like adaptability and analytical thinking) and technical skills (i.e., skills specific to an industry or area like risk assessment and incident analysis and response) in a competitive market. They realized that they needed to clearly define the various roles and career paths in cyber security and IT

risk and the skills needed for successful performance across these roles.

Perennial Talent was hired to work with the client's subject matter experts to identify the critical skills needed across the different roles (e.g., analyst, sr. analyst, manager, sr. manager, director) for six different job families. We also developed custom 5-level technical skills, while also leveraging the clients existing skill library. In total, we helped them to develop 25 skill profiles.

Building out these skill profiles helped our client's managers have more confidence in their hiring decisions and performance discussions. Employees also reported greater transparency in terms of understanding what skills they needed to be successful in their current job and other roles they wanted to explore in terms of their careers.

THE KEY TO
RESULTS IS ACTION

If you follow these 3 shifts you will be on your way to ensuring that you can continuously hire, engage, and retain people with the rights skills in the right roles.

Want to speed-up the process laid out in this article and complete these three shifts in 30 days or less with the help of Perennial Talent? Schedule a 15-min call with Christine Lamothe to see how we can help:

https://calendly.com/christinelamothe