

Which competencies do organisations use the most, for selection and development?

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This is the year of research, where compelling ideas and insights are shared with all! Having conducted multiple research analyses for clients, I thought it was time that we, at HFMtalentindex, shared the information and insights gained through these research requests with the HR community. The idea is to focus on a specific topic, whereby an article will be written and which will be followed with an interview of a person working within the HR work field. This is meant to infuse hard data with a more human touch! The article will mainly focus on the research elements and what the results mean, followed by an interview, which can place these results in a more relevant real life context.

Competency Library

The HFMtalentindex competency library consists of 44 competencies

Most Used Competencies

The analysis tallied the number of times a competency was used in a unique profile

Conclusion

The competencies that are chosen are quite generic

Introduction

The topic of this article was brought up during a meeting with a few of our psychologists. They were curious to know (empirically) what competencies are used most by our clients when building profiles for specific functions. I thought that was also interesting for our clients and readers to know too!

I chose to look into the data of two of our assessments that rely on competency profiles, the Select and the Develop. The former is usually used when clients are selecting a candidate for a certain position and want to know whether the candidate has the potential to do the job well, based on personality factors. The latter is a development tool, where the candidate is also measured against a competency profile, additionally they also receive feedback from colleagues, managers, subordinates, etc. This means that they not only receive a potential score on the profile, but also an indication of how well they fulfil that potential.

The main question is: Which competencies are used most for selection and development? The follow up questions are: Are there differences between selection and development on the type of competencies chosen? Do specific groupings of profiles have different emphasis on the types of competencies used (i.e. senior management versus middle management)?

Competency Library

At HFMtalentindex, our competency library consists of 44 competencies that fall under four distinct strengths. The four categories are: Operational Strength, Interpersonal Strength, Personal Strength, and Conceptual Strength .

Operational Strength (OS) consists of twelve competencies that relate to skills that are necessary in accomplishing a particular task.

Interpersonal Strength (IPS) consists of twelve competencies that relate to skills that are necessary in interacting with others and accomplishing things together.

Personal Strength (PS) consists of thirteen competencies that relate to the drive to accomplish things independently.

Conceptual Strength (CS) consist of seven competencies that relate to intellectual skills or abilities that are pertinent to the task at hand and shouldn't be confused with intelligence.

The competencies are based on an individual's personality, using specific personality indicators to measure the individual's potential of displaying certain skills within a working environment. The idea is that clients create a specific profile for a function based on a few competencies that encompass what is necessary to succeed in that particular function.

There are four approaches that are commonly used to create a profile. The first approach is when a client creates a profile based on what they believe is necessary for the function. The second is a collaboration between the client and account manager, where the account manager creates a profile based on what the client believes is needed for the function. The third is through a questionnaire which enables the client to send said questionnaire around to experts within the company, asking them what they believe is necessary for the function, which can be done through the online platform that the clients use for assessments. Lastly, a profile can be created through research, by comparing those who succeed in the function to those who are not performing up to standard and investigating which competencies the top performers have the most potential in. Based on these four approaches, which competencies show up most within a profile?

The Data

First we ensured that the analysis investigating the most used competencies was in fact measuring the most used competencies. If all the candidates had been used for the analysis, then candidates who shared the same profile would count as double, thus clients, who use certain profiles repeatedly, may skew the results towards certain competencies.

Second we limited the amount of competencies used within the profile, limiting the amount of competencies within a profile to between 3 to 15 competencies. The reason for this is that less than 3 competencies, the assessor wants to know something very specific about the person and with more than 15 competencies, the assessor is not sure exactly what is important for the function.

In the end, there were 2,051 unique Select profiles used and 552 unique Develop profiles.

Most Used Competencies

The initial question was to look into what the most used competencies were for the Select and the Develop and whether there were any differences between the two. The analysis tallied the number of times a competency was used in the list of unique profiles. A table was created to show the top six competencies used in the competency profiles (Table 1).

For example, in the table below, Results-Oriented is the most used competency for both the Select and Develop. In the case of the Select, Results-Oriented was found in 71% of the Select profiles, whereas the same competency was found in 64% of the Develop profiles.

Table 1 – Most Used Competencies.

Number	Select Profiles			Develop Profiles		
	Category	Competency	Percent	Category	Competency	Percent
1	OS	Results-Oriented	71%	OS	Results-Oriented	64%
2	IPS	Cooperation	62%	IPS	Cooperation	55%
3	IPS	Client Focus	54%	IPS	Client Focus	55%
4	CS	Analysing and Forming Opinions	47%	CS	Analysing and Forming Opinions	38%
5	OS	Devotion to Quality	40%	IPS	Motivating Devotion To Quality	36% 36%
6	PS	Initiative	31%	IPS	Initiative	34%

In both cases, the top six competencies are very similar, with Results-Oriented, Cooperation, and Client focus, being the most popular competencies. These competencies were found in more than half of the unique competency profiles. However, what is interesting to note are where the differences are between selection and development, which can be seen in the table below (Table 2).

Table 2 – Differences (Overall Picture)

Category	Competency	Select Percent	Develop Percent
PS	Personal Development	9%	24%
OS	Delegating	8%	20%
IPS	Providing Feedback	12%	24%
IPS	Teambuilding	9%	21%
OS	Accuracy	30%	11%
OS	Performing under Pressure	21%	10%
PS	Stress Resistance	19%	10%
PS	Service Oriented	14%	7%

Interestingly enough, when it comes to the Develop profiles, Personal Development is used more often and is apparently of less importance when selecting candidates. Concerning Delegating, Providing Feedback, and Teambuilding, it may be assumed that the candidates who are invited for development, are being groomed for management jobs, whereas with selection, more general there is more variety in types of jobs (entry level to management). In the case of selection, competencies such as Accuracy, Performing Under Pressure, Stress Resistance, and Service Oriented are more likely to be used.

Table 3 – Least used competencies (Overall Picture).

Category	Competency	Select Percent	Develop Percent
OS	Dutifulness	10%	8%
IPS	Adaptability	8%	7%
OS	Presenting	6%	7%
PS	Vitality	6%	4%
IPS	Analysing People's Motivations	4%	6%

Lastly, competencies that are used infrequently for both selection and development are listed in table 3.

What does this mean?

Select (for selection purposes)

- The competencies chosen are broad in nature and are not function specific. They are skills that every function requires to some degree. The combination of competencies illustrate what the candidate can do in a global sense.
- If one were to ask an individual who is unfamiliar with competencies and their nuances, these would be the type of skills that they would mention as skills of importance; they are generic in nature and justifiable in most contexts.

Develop (for development purposes)

- As with the select, the competencies chosen are broad.
- However, there are two examples of competencies that are more context specific, with Motivation and Persuasiveness. The assumption being that the develop is most likely used to evaluate candidates that are on a managerial track. The emphasis these two competencies have are to evaluate the candidates' ability to influence others.
- It is also interesting to note that Personal Development is rarely utilised for selection, but becomes a competency of slight importance in development.

Least Used Competencies

- Concerning Dutifulness, Adaptability and Vitality, these are competencies that are quite generic and are difficult to apply to a certain function. It is difficult to imagine the context in which to use some of these competencies and what their relationship to success are.
- In the case of Presenting and Analysing People's Motivations, they are so context related, that assessor's may find them too specific and would rather evaluate other more broad competencies.

Profile Groups

From the unique profiles, I grouped profiles that had similar themes. For instance, I grouped profiles that related to Senior Management and Director positions into one group and investigated the type of competencies mostly used here. In total, six different groups were created: Leadership Profiles, Senior Management, Middle Management, Commercial, Financial, and IT/Technical.

Leadership Profiles

The leadership profiles consisted of profiles that were related to leadership, which ranged from functions from team leaders to middle management and above.

Table 4 – Most used competencies for leadership

Number	Select Profiles			Develop Profiles		
	Category	Competency	Percent	Category	Competency	Percent
1	OS	Results-Oriented	78%	OS	Results-Oriented	68%
2	IPS	Cooperation	52%	IPS	Client Focus	51%
3	IPS	Client Focus	50%	IPS	Persuasiveness	41%
4	CS	Analysing and Forming Opinions	48%	CS	Motivating	39%
5	IPS	Persuasiveness	38%	IPS	Cooperation	38%
6	OS	Directing	35%	OS	Directing	36%
				PS	Entrepreneurship	36%

Compared to the overall picture of most widely used competencies, Results-Oriented, Cooperation, and Client Focus remain competencies of importance. However, two unique competencies, Persuasiveness and Direction, stand out and are deemed important for leadership functions. Analysing and Forming Opinions remains a competency of importance for selection, however for development, there is a shift towards Motivating and Entrepreneurship.

Table 5 – Differences in used leadership competencies.

Category	Competency	Select Percent	Develop Percent
OS	Delegating	14%	30%
PS	Personal Development	4%	13%
IPS	Analysing People's Motivations	6%	11%
CS	Creativity	14%	7%
OS	Performing Under Pressure	30%	5%
PS	Resistance to Stress	21%	6%

For leadership profiles, Delegating and Personal Development are again more likely to be used for development, whereas Performing Under Pressure and Resistance to Stress are more likely to be used for selection, which both reflect what is seen in the overall picture of selection versus development.

What does this mean?

Select

- The usual suspects of competencies are found here too, with Results-Oriented, Client Focus, Cooperation, and Analysing and Forming Opinions.
- However, the leadership nuances are also present, in the form of Persuasiveness and Directing. These two competencies investigating the candidate's ability to influencing others around them.
- It would seem that in selection, assessors are also looking for people who are creative and are able to perform under pressure.

Develop

- As with the Select, Results-Oriented, Client Focus, Cooperation, and Analysing and Forming Opinions are found in the top 6.
- There is a lot of overlap between selection and development, with the inclusion of influencing competencies.
- There is also the inclusion of Entrepreneurship, so later in the careers of managers becoming more bold and showing initiative is more important.
- The emphasis of influencing competencies are further illustrated when looking at the differences in used competencies in table 5, with the inclusion of Delegating and Analysing People's Motivations.

Senior Management & Directors

Due to small group of Senior Management Develop profiles, instead of the normal Top six, the focus was put on the Top five, since the competencies listed in the 6th position was quite long and represented competencies that would have been in less than a quarter of all profiles.

Table 6 – Most used competencies (Senior Management)

Number	Select Profiles			Develop Profiles		
	Category	Competency	Percent	Category	Competency	Percent
1	OS	Results-Oriented	80%	OS	Results-Oriented	72%
				CS	Strategic Insight	61%
2	IPS	Cooperation	53%	IPS	Persuasiveness	61%
				OS	Directing	61%
3	CS	Helicopter View	47%	CS	Innovating	50%
	IPS	Creating Support	47%	IPS	Creating Support	50%
4	CS	Strategic Insight	43%	IPS	Providing Feedback	33%
	IPS	Persuasiveness	43%	IPS	Motivating	33%
	PS	Commercial Drive	43%	IPS	Organisational Sensitivity	33%
				PS	Entrepreneurship	33%
5	CS	Analysing and Forming Opinions	40%	CS	Helicopter View	28%
	OS	Decisiveness	40%	CS	Market Orientation	28%
				OS	Structuring	28%

When comparing to the general picture of selection versus development, some differences were observed. Again, Results-Oriented remains a competency of importance and popularity. However, Client Focus is no longer listed in the top five, with Cooperation important in selection, but less emphasized in development (22%). The emphasis shifts to hiring people who have a more holistic view of the situation at hand and are able to use that information to the benefit of the company.

When comparing the Senior Management Select profiles and Develop profiles, the competencies most used are very similar. However, development has more competencies relating to the interaction with subordinates, such as Directing, Creating Support, Providing Feedback, Motivating, and Structuring.

Table 7 – Differences in senior management used competencies

Category	Competency	Select Percent	Develop Percent
OS	Directing	14%	30%
PS	Teambuilding	4%	13%
IPS	Analysing People's Motivations	6%	11%
IPS	Providing Feedback	14%	7%
CS	Analysing and Forming Opinions	30%	5%
PS	Willingness to Change	21%	6%
IPS	Client Focus	33%	17%
PS	Drive	23%	0%
PS	Initiative	23%	11%

Based on table 7, when looking at development, the biggest difference in used competencies are Directing and Providing Feedback. Whereas, for selection, the emphasis is on Analysing and Forming Opinions, Willingness to Change, Client Focus, Drive and to a lesser extent Initiative.

What does this mean?

Select

- The competencies in the top 5 can be described as competencies which emphasise the ability to think and analyse situations, such as Analysing and Forming Opinions, Situational Awareness, etc.
- This is in conjunction with competencies that are categorised as influence competencies. It would seem that in selection, assessors are also looking for people who are creative and are able to perform under pressure.
- However, it would seem that there is an emphasis on the commercial side of business, with the inclusion of Commercial drive.
- When looking at the differences between selection and development, we see that assessors are looking for candidates that are able to adapt and bring energy to the team. They also want candidates that are innovative and creative.

Develop

- In general, the competencies that are currently chosen are logic from an organizational point of view and reflect what is general necessary for senior management.
- As with selection, the emphasis is on thinking and influencing competencies.
- However, the emphasis with development is on competencies that are also related to coaching (i.e. Providing Feedback, Motivating) and evaluating how the candidate acts as a manager (i.e. Structuring, Directing), rather than the commercial side, i.e. generating business.
- The emphasis of influencing competencies are further illustrated when looking at the differences in used competencies in table 5, with the inclusion of Delegating and Analysing People's Motivations.
- The emphasis on coaching is further emphasised when looking at table 7, with competencies such as Teambuilding and Analysing People's Motivations.

Middle Management

A list of the top six competencies are shown in table 8.

Table 8 – Most used competencies (Middle Management)

Number	Category	Select Profiles		Develop Profiles		
		Competency	Percent	Category	Competency	Percent
1	OS	Results-Oriented	75%	OS	Results-Oriented	59%
2	OS	Directing	52%	IPS	Analysing and Forming Opinions	51%
3	CS	Analysing and Forming Opinions	48%	IPS	Persuasiveness	44%
				IPS	Cooperation	44%
4	IPS	Cooperation	46%	CS	Structuring	41%
5	IPS	Motivating	38%	IPS	Cooperation	39%
				IPS	Organisational Sensitivity	39%
6	IPS	Client Focus	39%	IPS	Motivating	37%

When compared to the overall picture, the top three most used competencies can be found for both the Select and the Develop. However, their importance have shifted, with Result-Oriented remaining the most used competency, while Cooperation and Client Focus drop below the top three. In the case of the Select, it is interesting to note that Directing is in the top three most used competencies, with Motivating in the top six, which is different to what is seen with Senior Management. Whereas, with the Develop, Structuring and Organisational Sensitivity are found in the top six, which does reflect Senior Management.

Table 9 - Differences in middle management used competencies

Category	Competency	Select Percent	Develop Percent
OS	Delegating	17%	32%
CS	Market Orientation	9%	15%
IPS	Listening Skills	5%	15%
IPS	Analysing People's Motivations	3%	15%
CS	Strategic Insight	25%	12%
PS	Commercial Drive	18%	7%
CS	Innovating	17%	5%
OS	Performing Under Pressure	17%	0%

When it comes to development, the competency Delegating is more likely to be used than with selection, whereas with selection, the competency of Strategic insight is more important. Concerning Strategic Insight, which was a top six competency for the development of Senior Management, it is now an important selection criteria for Middle Management rather than for development.

What does this mean?

Select

- Again, overarching competencies are present in the top 6. However, a shift can be seen towards more operational competencies as seen in table 9.
- The emphasis is on hard, more business-like, skills which are competencies that measure how one does something from an action point of view, for instance, Directing, Commercial Drive, Analysing, and Innovating.

Develop

- The same concept is observed for the Develop, with a shift towards operational competencies.
- However, the emphasis with the Develop is on more soft skills, which are competencies that are more passive, such as Listening Skills or Analysing Peoples Motivations.
- It is interesting to note that Delegating, which is used rarely for selection, is used more often for development, indicating a potential underlying problem with that skill set and the need for candidates to develop it further to meet the requirements of the job.

Commercial

The commercial group consisted of functions that ranged from account managers to sales.

Table 10 – Most used competencies (Commercial)

Number	Category	Select Profiles			Develop Profiles		
		Competency	Percent	Category	Competency	Percent	
1	OS	Results-Oriented	82%	OS	Results-Oriented	87%	
2	IPS	Client Focus	72%	IPS	Client Focus	77%	
3	PS	Commercial Drive	59%	IPS	Persuasiveness	66%	
4	IPS	Cooperation	58%	CS	Motivating	60%	
5	IPS	Persuasiveness	51%	IPS	Cooperation	51%	
6	CS	Analysing and Forming Opinions	44%	OS	Directing	49%	

When compared to the overall picture, both selection and development have the same top three competencies: Results-Oriented, Cooperation, and Client Focus. However, with selection there is the inclusion of Persuasiveness, which makes sense when looking at sales related functions. The same can be said with Commercial Drive, which is found in both selection and development. Development on the other hand has Entrepreneurship and Motivating making the top six.

Table 11 - Differences in used competencies related to commercial functions.

Category	Competency	Select Percent	Develop Percent
IPS	Motivating	16%	51%
PS	Willingness to Change	19%	45%
OS	Decisiveness	16%	34%
OS	Directing	13%	32%
CS	Creativity	27%	13%
IPS	Organisational Sensitivity	19%	6%

While looking at differences between the two, a big difference can be found with Motivating. More than half of the development profiles contain Motivating versus a little more than a tenth of the selection profiles. The Willingness to Change is also an interesting competency to look at, since this competency is usually used in selection (i.e. Senior Management, Middle Management) rather than in development.

What does this mean?

Select

- As seen with the other groups, there are the overarching competencies and the influence competencies.
- What is unique about this group is that the emphasis is now on people who have the skills to come up with creative ideas, bring a lot of energy, and have a diplomatic approach to selling ideas.

Develop

- The Develop reflects a lot of the same competencies as the Select. However, there is heavier emphasis on influencing and leading people, such as Motivating and Directing.
- There is also a slight tendency towards management functions in the Develop, such as Teambuilding, Directing, and Entrepreneurship.

Financial

Some examples of the functions that were included in this analysis were accountants to financial controllers.

Table 12 – Most used competencies (Financial)

Number	Select Profiles			Develop Profiles		
	Category	Competency	Percent	Category	Competency	Percent
1	CS	Analysing and Forming Opinions	77%	IPS	Cooperation	59%
				OS	Results-Oriented	59%
2	OS	Results-Oriented	76%	IPS	Client Focus	51%
				IPS	Decisiveness	44%
3	IPS	Cooperation	56%	CS	Helicopter view	47%
				IPS	Persuasiveness	47%
4	IPS	Client Focus	55%	PS	Initiative	41%
5	OS	Devotion to Quality	50%	CS	Analysing and Forming Opinions	35%
				CS	Motivating	35%
				OS	Devotion to Quality	35%
6	OS	Accuracy	42%	PS	Commercial Drive	29%
				PS	Entrepreneurship	29%
				PS	Willingness to Change	29%

As with the other groups, Results-Oriented is in the top three competencies, however this group is the first to have competing competencies for the first place. There is a slight emphasis here on Analysing and Forming Opinions for selection. It is also interesting to note that Accuracy also breaks the mould and is in the top six most used competencies. Concerning development, there are a few more competencies that end up in the top six, which is due to the small number of profiles in the group. However, development includes competencies that tap into measuring whether the candidate is able to create a more holistic view of the situation and use that to their benefit.

Table 13 - Differences in used competencies related to financial functions

Category	Competency	Select Percent	Develop Percent
OS	Decisiveness	18%	53%
CS	Situational Awareness	6%	35%
PS	Entrepreneurship	12%	29%
PS	Commerical Drive	8%	29%
CS	Strategic Insights	8%	24%
CS	Innovating	6%	24%
IPS	Organisational Sensitivity	33%	12%
IPS	Creating Support	23%	12%
PS	Integrity	23%	0%
OS	Performing Under Pressure	20%	6%

As mentioned, the focus on development is evaluating the individual's penchant for gaining insights into the current situation and using that to their benefit. With selection however, the focus is more on whether the candidate is able to tap into what the organisation needs and whether they can perform under pressure.

What does this mean?

Select

- Based on the top six competencies, the candidate that assessors ideally look for, are conservative individuals, who will do what is expected of them.
- The focus with financials is whether they are secure with the content within their work environment. Do they have the ability to analyse and form relevant opinions? Are they accurate and is the work they do up to standard? That is the main focus with financials.
- Bluntly: are the candidates smart and have the ability to work hard like they are suppose to do.

Develop

- There is a shift when it comes to development. Assessors want to know if candidates are able to be innovative and whether they have the ability to be more commercial and entrepreneurial. It would seem that what candidates are being selected on, is not necessarily what is needed for success in the future.
- There is a need for more initiative, creativity and commercial skills. So more outward bound enery.

There is a dichotomy. Selection focuses on content and accuracy, whereas development focuses on energy, commercial aptitude and situational awareness.

IT & Technical

The group was quite diverse, with the group consisting web designers, programmers, and engineers. Due to the smaller number of competency profiles for the Develop, a top five was created, instead of the usual top six.

Table 14 – Top 5 Competencies IT/Technical

Number	Select Profiles			Develop Profiles		
	Category	Competency	Percent	Category	Competency	Percent
1	IPS	Cooperation	79%	OS	Results-Oriented	70%
2	CS	Analysing and Forming Opinions	68%	OS	Devotion to Quality	60%
				OS	Decisiveness	60%
3	OS	Results-Oriented	67%	IPS	Cooperation	50%
				OS	Planning	50%
4	IPS	Client Focus	52%	IPS	Performing Under Pressure	40%
	OS	Devotion To Quality	52%	PS	Analysing and Forming Opinions	40%
				CS	Willingness to Change	40%
5	OS	Accuracy	41%	CS	Innovating	30%
				OS	Structuring	30%
				IPS	Motivating	30%
				OS	Directing	30%
				IPS	Persuasiveness	30%
				IPS	Listening Skills	30%

As with the financial group, for selection, Results-Oriented is no longer the most used competency, however it remains in the top three. The important competencies for selection are Cooperation and Analysing and Forming Opinions. Due to the number of competencies in the top five for development, it is hard to highlight important competencies. However, there seems to be a more managerial choice of competencies for development in comparison to selection. There was no possibility to illustrate the big differences between selection and development on competencies used, due to the small number of unique development profiles relating to IT and Technical functions.

What does this mean?

Select

- The IT and Technical group mirror what is seen with the Financial group, in that they are seeking cautious and accurate people, who are comfortable with the complex content of the field.

Develop

- The shift in development is very similar to the shift observed with the financials. However, instead of being commercial and entrepreneurial, the emphasis is on innovation and being able to change.
- There is also a shift towards more managerial competencies in the form of influence competencies, such as: Motivating, Directing and Persuasiveness.

Conclusion

When looking at the overall picture of most used competencies, the competencies that are chosen are quite generic. They are not function specific, however encompass skills that one can apply to multiple functions. As our in house expert stated, if a person, who was unaware of the competencies and their nuances, were asked to describe what is necessary for a job in general, they would use key words that would relate to the competencies that ended up in the top six. There is a slight shift when it comes to development to, what is assumed to be, more managerial jobs, since there are more competencies that relate to the influencing of others.

When it comes to the job specific groups, some differences were found. What is interesting to note is that Results-Oriented remains the most used competency in almost all the groups, with the exception of Financial and IT/Technical. Client Focus and Cooperation always make their appearances with selection in most cases, but there is a predominant shift when it comes to development. The shift usually includes more competencies that are related to influencing others in the work environment.

Lastly, when it comes to financial and IT/Technical functions, what is intriguing is the shift that is observed there. During selection, the focus is on hiring people who are cautious and conservative. However, during development, the focus shifts to measuring the extent to which the individual is outgoing, energetic, and whether they can think outside the box.

Please share your insights and cases! Reactions, ideas and conclusions are welcome: research@hfmtalentindex.com.

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HFMtalentindex

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