

## A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF HUMAN RESOURCE COMPETENCIES

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### **Abstract**

The paper starts with a note on competencies and narrates leadership competencies followed by theoretical models for the new HR role orientation .It emphasizes on the changes in competencies required for HR practitioners where HR leadership plays a predominant role. The study aims to focus on universal applicability of HR competencies and compares between different ownership with questionnaire and cross tabulations. Twenty three competencies did not have significant difference based on ownership thereby they were universally imperative. Knowing Business process, marketing skills, innovation and creativity, Information technology and interpersonal skills elate the role of HR manager. The study captured that, most of the competencies were high in MNC when compared to public and private ownership.

**Key words :HR Competencies, New HR role orientation, Business process knowledge ,Interpersonal skills, leadership skills**

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## Preamble

Competency is related to a person's underlying attributes, such as his knowledge, skills, or abilities (Jian Han, *et al.*, 2006). This definition focuses on the efforts required by individuals in order for them to be competent or effective in their workplace performance. This definition differs from the other definitions of competency in which the term is treated as a measure of individual output (Hoffmann, 1999).

William J. Rothwell *et al.*, 1996 has described 'competencies are characteristics that typify exemplary performance'. Competency is the state or quality of being adequately or well qualified to perform a task. Most of the definition of competencies have two components:

- The competencies are observable or measurable knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA)
- These KSAs must distinguish between superiors and other performers

A competency model is a description of the characteristics associated with successful performance in an organizational setting, geographical area or occupation. A competency model is the result of competency assessment, the process of discovering competencies.

## Leadership competencies

While a person's superior determine if goals and objectives were met, only the person's subordinates can determine if he is a leader. Determining if a person has leadership skills is based upon the willingness of people to follow that person. Having the authority to order people around does not qualify a person as a leader on the other hand, if the follower accomplish something because of the direction of the leader and wants to be a part of that experience, then that establishes a follower/leader relationship.

Leadership translates vision into reality by inspiring followers to want to experience the change process. And to influence their followers to willingly jump into that experience, leaders need a specific set of competencies to guide their action. Although competencies will always differ from one leader to the next, having a core set to draw from increases their chance for success. These competencies can be thought of as the inner tools for motivating employees, directing

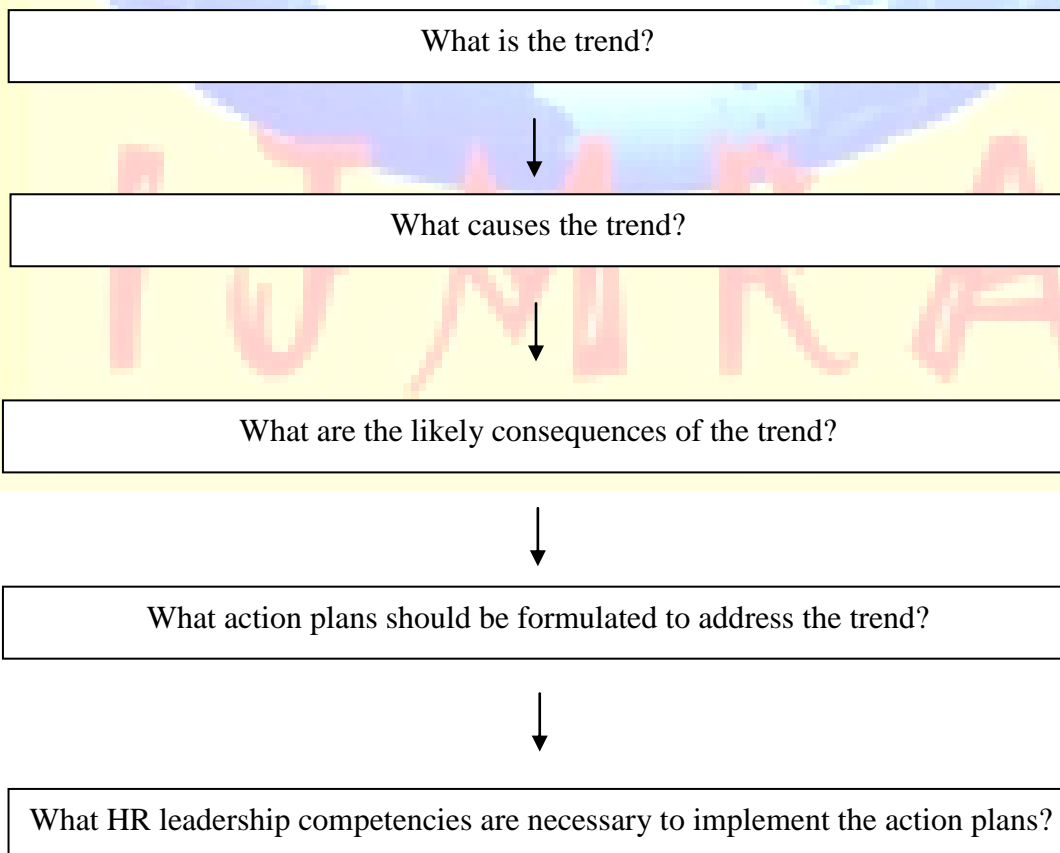
systems and processes, and guiding the business towards common goal that allow the organization to increase its value.

### Models for the new HR role orientation

A study was commissioned by the society for HRM and CCH, Inc. and was conducted in 1995-1996 by William J. Rothwell.

The results of the study indicate differences between the most important present and future competencies required for success by HR leaders. Two important models for the new HR role orientation named vertical integration model and were developed to horizontal integration model provide a solution to HR leaders to enact their new role orientation.

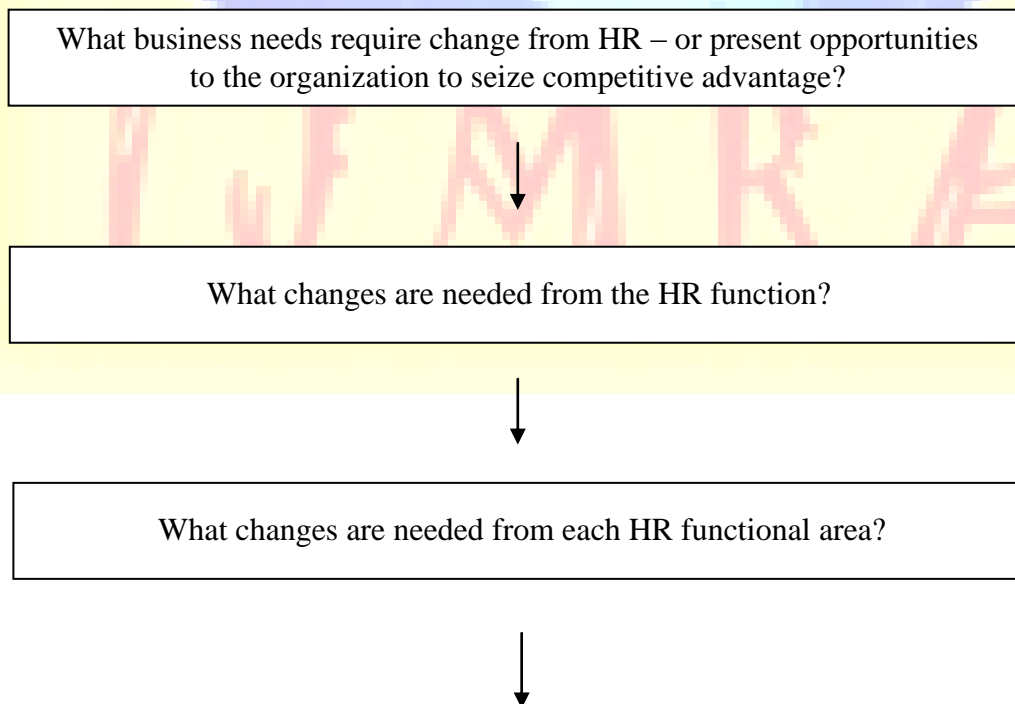
The Vertical Integration (VI) model provides a means by which to vertically integrate key issues in the external environment into organizational and HR issues. It is a tool for HR leaders to use to ensure that their efforts help meet and even anticipate business needs. The model orients HR leaders to the means by which to focus organizational action to achieve competitive advantage.



### Vertical Integration Model

The model consists of five key questions. Each question logically follows the one preceding it. The VI model provides guidance about how to apply information about what is happening in the external environment and transform it into possible action steps for the organization and the HR function to seize emerging opportunities or to avert potential problems.

The fifth and final question of the model is directed at individual HR practitioners who apply the model calls for HR leaders to be able to monitor the external environments of the organizations they serve. They have to get to know the business, the customers and other factors in the external environment that affect the organization's competitive advantages. Once they are familiar with the business drivers, they can apply the VI model to a specific trend to find effective ways to integrate HR strategy with organizational strategy. Indeed, the VI model may also give them the capability to spot ways to lead the business, and to take preventive action on threats posed by the external environment on the organization. In short, the model gives guidance about what to do and why to do it. The horizontal integration (HI) model shows HR leaders how to integrate the sometimes scattered and isolated components of the HR system to realize competitive advantage for the organization through people.



How and when should the changes be implemented, and what are the expected costs and benefits that will result from the changes?



How should the changes be communicated, and who should be involved in making them?



How will results be measured, and how will continuous improvement be ensured?

### Horizontal Integration Model

The VI and HI models can be used together. When they are, the VI and HI models provide a comprehensive approach to breaking trends in the external environment that affect the organization and drive proactive or reactive change by the HR function. In that way, HR assumes a leadership role for helping the organization seize competitive advantage from – or sidetrack threats arising from – changing external conditions.

### Strategic HR competencies

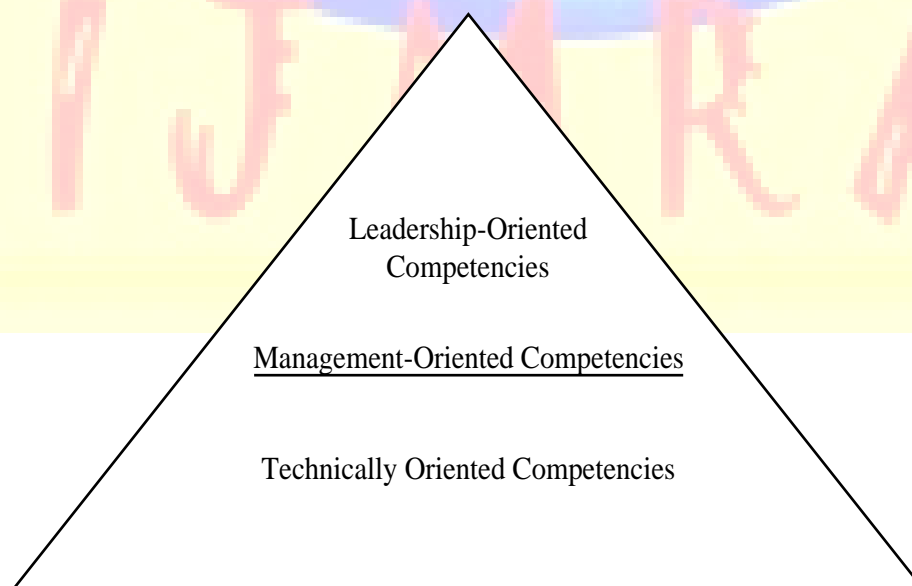
The competencies required of HR practitioners have changed over the years to considerable extend due to the expectation of internal customers (Employees) and changes in the business scenario. In mid 1980's the HR function placed greater emphasis on the satisfaction of their internal customers and bench marking these services against external vendors. This philosophy was oriented towards meeting the needs of particular business units. Only in 1990's, it has become necessary for the HR function to follow a business orientation philosophy. The HR function is charged with the responsibility of advising and counseling line managers in people-related business issues. To accomplish this successfully, HR practitioners should think beyond internal customers and need to be familiar with external customers, regulators of the businesses, competitors and addvalue to the corporation as a whole by requiring higher levels of team work

among the HR function, senior management, operating units in the field, labor unions and external advisers.

Competency level of HR managers has a major influence on the level of integration between HR management and strategy (Golden and Ramanujam, 1985; Buller, 1988; Truss and Gratton, 1994)

Choosing the right HR manager is important to the strategic management of the HR function. If HR professionals do not have the right skills, and are not able to think on a macro business level, the HR function would be relegated to a supportive / secondary role. On the other hand, if HR managers can re-evaluate their priorities and acquire a new set of professional and personal competencies, the HR function would be able to ride the wave of business evolution proudly with other functions in the organization (Ulrich, 1996; Purcell, 1996; Ulrich *et al.*, 1995; Becker and Gerhart, 1996; Barney and Wright, 1998; Wright *et al.*, 1988).

HR competencies can be conceptualized in terms of a pyramid with the leadership oriented competencies the most important located at the pyramid's top, the management – oriented competencies located in the middle, and the technically oriented competencies at the pyramid's base. An HR practitioner whether an HR functional specialist or a generalist, can demonstrate any or all the competencies on the pyramid.



Based on the findings of *A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Vision* (Rothwell, 1996d), the following competencies are central to demonstrating HR leadership in the future:

- Credibility : being perceived by others as efficient and effective in addressing business- and people-related problems
- People skills : being able to work with others effectively and having interpersonal skills and influence
- Understanding business: knowing the business and the organization's strategic plans and objectives, having a grasp of operational problems confronted by line managers and other key stakeholders; and demonstrating awareness of the key competitive challenges confronting the organization at present and in the future
- Consultative approach: demonstrating a willingness and desire to work with others to attack and troubleshoot problems, avert problems, seize future opportunities; ability to apply analytical skills and formulate effective solutions that draw on expert knowledge of HR policies and practices in the organization, in the industry, and in the HR field
- Comfort with change: demonstrating ability to juggle multiple, and potentially conflicting, priorities and projects without being overcome by undue stress; ability to balance personal and professional interests effectively
- Developing credibility: ability to command increasing respect for one's abilities by establishing a consistent track record of reliability, creativity and leadership in HR policies and practices among peers and such key stakeholders as line managers

#### HR Management-Oriented Competencies

HR managers share the same competencies as are necessary for line managers and other staff managers. These competencies can be divided into two categories: executive competencies and middle-management competencies. The following executive and middle-management competencies, identified by Spencer and Spencer (1993, pp. 343-344), will become increasingly important in the future:

For Executives

- Strategic thinking: ability to understand rapidly changing environmental trends, market opportunities, competitive threats, and strengths and weaknesses of organizations, and to identify the optimum strategic response
- Change leadership: ability to communicate a compelling vision of a firm's strategy that makes adaptive responses appear both feasible and desirable to its many stakeholders, arousing their genuine motivation and commitment to act as sponsors of innovation and entrepreneurship, and to allocate the firm's resources optimally to implement frequent changes
- Relationship management: ability to establish relationships with and influence complex networks of others whose cooperation is needed for the executive's organization to succeed and over whom he or she has no formal authority: product champions, customers, stockholders, labor representatives, government regulators at all levels (local, state, and federal), legislators, and interest groups

For Managers

- Flexibility: willingness and ability to change managerial structures
- Empowering: sharing information, participatively soliciting co-workers' ideas, fostering employee development, delegating meaningful responsibility, providing coaching feedback, expressing positive expectations of subordinates (irrespective of diversity differences), rewarding performance improvement, all of which make employees feel more capable and motivated to assume greater responsibility
- Team facilitation: group process skills needed to get diverse groups of people to work together effectively to achieve a common goal: establishing goal and role clarity, controlling "overtalkers" inviting silent members to participate, and resolving conflicts
- Portability: ability to adapt rapidly to and function effectively in any foreign environment so as to be immediately transferable to positions in Nairobi, Jakarta, Moscow, or anywhere else in the world

These strategically oriented competencies fit well for any manager. However, they become increasingly more important for HR practitioners who accept the challenge of becoming fully involved and participating partners in the business, driving change in the organization,



and working to improve results for continuous improvement ("Competencies Drive HR Practices," 1996).

### HR Technically Oriented Competencies

In 1995, the National Academy of Public Administration set out to develop a comprehensive model that could be used by HR practitioners in both the public and private sectors. The methodology used to build the model included a review of current literature on HR competencies and proprietary HR competency models used in private and public sector organizations ("A Competency Model for Human Resources Professionals" 1996).

A one-day workshop was held in December 1995 with agency consortium representatives to obtain their views on the draft model. The workshop included presentation on the use of competency-based HR programs in two major U.S. Companies. A panel of government agency representatives shared their experience in using competency models, and other experts made presentations on competency-based performance improvement, a competency-driven occupational database for all federal jobs, and research on competencies. The participants then adjourned to small groups to develop a framework for their competency model.

The resulting HR competency model has several advantages. First, it is based on research. Second, it was developed using public and private sector input. Third, it is in the public domain and can thus be used without copyright permission. Finally, it is a comprehensive HR competency model that covers the most technical areas of HR practice. A dictionary of competencies have been identified as important to HR professionals who perform tasks in a work environment in which the HR unit is part of the organization management team.

### Objectives

1. To study universality of HR competencies
2. To compare HR competencies observed by employees from different ownership

### Methodology

While the HR function has become vital in helping organizations achieve competitive advantage (Becker & Huselid, 1998; Wright & Snell, 1998), the KSA of professionals who develop and

implement HRM practices have not been thoroughly studied within Asia. HRM as a management field is in its relatively early stages in Asia compared to its western counterparts (Jian Han *et al.*, 2006).

There is limited evidence that western HR competency models are transferable to the Asian context. Our study design has a methodological advantage that we have directly collected HR competency data from foreign owned MNC and local corporations of India to check competencies universally applicable. Multiple sources were tapped including executives, HR managers, line managers and employees. This provides a more balanced and less biased view, with the aim of providing incremental insights into the research and development of Indian HR professional competencies.

Dictionary of competencies developed in December 1995 in one-day workshop by National Academy of Public Administration which is in public domain is used in the study. A purposive choice has been made to select three divergent companies, operating in India with different ownership as the stratas. Since it is an on-going research the identities are concealed and only percentage values are tabulated. Stratified simple random sampling was applied for the selection of samples from all levels of employees with the sample size of 390. We are trying to measure the competencies based on the performance of HR managers because it provides a completeness in assessing the ability as well as the attitude. Five point Likert-like scale was used to measure how far the competencies were practiced with intensities ranging from Not at all to Very often.

Chi-square test is used to assess if there is statistically significant difference between the opinion of the employees depending upon the type of ownership. Only tables which do not have statistical difference at 5% level of significance is reported. Depending on the number of degrees of freedom  $\chi^2$  test is applicable in cross tabulation. If degrees of freedom  $> 1$  (as in this case), then the  $\chi^2$  test could be used if less than 20 percent of the expected frequencies are smaller than 5, or when any expected frequency is less than 1 (Cooper & Schindler, 2006). The above condition is fulfilled in the study applied.

**Results**

**Able to access & balance competing values & priorities**

**Table No. 1**

	<b>Private (%)</b>	<b>Public (%)</b>	<b>MNC (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
Not at all	6.9	5.3	2.0	5.5
Infrequently	20.0	14.8	3.9	15.5
Occasionally	41.3	36.7	17.6	36.1
Often	20.6	33.1	47.1	29.7
Very often	11.3	10.1	29.4	13.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

P-value : 0.000 < 0.05

**Able to be innovative and creative**

**Table No. 2**

	<b>Private (%)</b>	<b>Public (%)</b>	<b>MNC (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
Not at all	11.9	3.1	3.9	7.0
Infrequently	13.2	8.6	9.8	10.8
Occasionally	35.8	38.9	33.3	36.8
Often	32.1	33.3	35.3	33.1
Very often	6.9	16.0	17.6	12.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

P-value : 0.017 < 0.05

**Able to design and use surveys to obtain feedback from customers**

**Table No. 3**

	Private (%)	Public (%)	MNC (%)	Total (%)
Not at all	9.4	6.7	0	7.0
Infrequently	15.7	8.5	0	10.4
Occasionally	32.7	28.7	31.4	30.7
Often	30.2	42.1	39.2	36.6
Very often	11.9	14.0	29.4	15.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

P-value : 0.001 < 0.05

**Able to effectively manage resources**

**Table No. 4**

	Private (%)	Public (%)	MNC (%)	Total (%)
Not at all	7.5	5.5	2.0	5.9
Infrequently	18.9	18.3	3.9	16.6
Occasionally	26.4	36.0	29.4	31.0
Often	32.7	25.6	52.9	32.4
Very often	14.5	14.6	11.8	14.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

P-value : 0.012 < 0.05

**Able to influence others to act**

**Table No. 5**

	Private (%)	Public (%)	MNC (%)	Total (%)
Not at all	18.5	11.6	2.0	13.2

Infrequently	14.6	13.4	2.0	12.4
Occasionally	29.9	31.1	29.4	30.4
Often	26.8	31.1	47.1	31.5
Very often	10.2	12.8	19.6	12.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

P-value : 0.006 < 0.05

**Communicates well**

**Table No. 6**

	Private (%)	Public (%)	MNC (%)	Total (%)
Not at all	8.9	5.4	3.9	6.7
Infrequently	17.7	17.5	2.0	15.5
Occasionally	32.3	44.0	25.5	36.5
Often	26.6	23.5	51.0	28.5
Very often	14.6	9.6	17.6	12.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

P-value : 0.001 < 0.05

**Customer service orientation**

**Table No. 7**

	Private (%)	Public (%)	MNC (%)	Total (%)
Not at all	7.0	4.9	2.0	5.4
Infrequently	18.4	14.7	2.0	14.5
Occasionally	34.2	41.7	27.5	36.6
Often	27.8	32.5	43.1	32.0

Very often	12.7	6.1	25.5	11.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

P-value : 0.001 < 0.05

**Develops effective solutions to mission requirements using principles and programs**

**Table No. 8**

	Private (%)	Public (%)	MNC (%)	Total (%)
Not at all	5.0	5.9	0	4.7
Infrequently	13.8	14.7	2.0	12.6
Occasionally	32.5	25.3	23.5	28.1
Often	36.3	37.6	51.0	38.8
Very often	12.5	16.5	23.5	15.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

P-value : 0.049 < 0.05

**Has marketing skills**

**Table No. 9**

	Private (%)	Public (%)	MNC (%)	Total (%)
Not at all	8.8	7.1	2.0	7.1
Infrequently	17.6	15.4	3.9	14.8
Occasionally	27.0	34.9	23.5	30.1
Often	34.0	31.4	41.2	33.8
Very often	12.6	11.2	29.4	14.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

P-value : 0.008 < 0.05

**Knows, applies and manages best practices for maximum human potential**

**Table No. 10**

	<b>Private (%)</b>	<b>Public (%)</b>	<b>MNC (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
Not at all	9.6	8.9	0	8.0
Infrequently	24.2	17.9	13.7	19.9
Occasionally	26.1	39.3	27.5	32.2
Often	28.0	25.0	45.1	29.0
Very often	12.1	8.9	13.7	10.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

P-value : 0.015 < 0.05

**Knows business systems thinking and information technology**

**Table No. 11**

	<b>Private (%)</b>	<b>Public (%)</b>	<b>MNC (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
Not at all	5.0	10.1	0	6.6
Infrequently	9.3	10.7	5.9	9.5
Occasionally	35.4	34.5	15.7	32.4
Often	35.4	29.8	62.7	36.6
Very often	14.9	14.9	15.7	15.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

P-value : 0.002 < 0.05

**Knows Individual and Team behaviour**

**Table No. 12**

	<b>Private (%)</b>	<b>Public (%)</b>	<b>MNC (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
Not at all	5.0	5.4	2.0	4.7
Infrequently	19.3	7.7	5.9	12.4
Occasionally	29.8	30.4	43.1	31.8
Often	33.5	43.5	41.2	38.9
Very often	12.4	13.1	7.8	12.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

P-value : 0.028 < 0.05

**Knows staff and line roles**

**Table No. 13**

	<b>Private (%)</b>	<b>Public (%)</b>	<b>MNC (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
Not at all	3.8	6.1	0	4.3
Infrequently	17.8	17.6	8.0	16.4
Occasionally	37.6	39.4	20.0	36.0
Often	31.2	26.1	54.0	32.0
Very often	9.6	10.9	18.0	11.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

P-value : 0.005 < 0.05

**Manages conflict**

**Table No. 14**



	<b>Private (%)</b>	<b>Public (%)</b>	<b>MNC (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
Not at all	4.4	6.1	2.0	4.8
Infrequently	18.8	14.5	11.8	16.0
Occasionally	28.1	34.5	17.6	29.5
Often	38.1	30.3	35.3	34.3
Very often	10.6	14.5	33.3	15.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

P-value : 0.006 < 0.05

**Exhibits ethical behaviour**

**Table No. 15**

	<b>Private (%)</b>	<b>Public (%)</b>	<b>MNC (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
Not at all	8.3	7.9	5.9	7.8
Infrequently	13.4	9.1	5.9	10.5
Occasionally	33.1	42.1	19.6	35.2
Often	29.9	30.5	39.2	31.5
Very often	15.3	10.4	29.4	15.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

P-value : 0.013 < 0.05

**Understands business process**

**Table No. 16**

	<b>Private (%)</b>	<b>Public (%)</b>	<b>MNC (%)</b>	<b>Total (%)</b>
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Not at all	10.1	5.9	0	6.8
Infrequently	15.7	12.4	0	12.1
Occasionally	28.3	31.8	19.6	28.7
Often	35.2	35.3	45.1	36.6
Very often	10.7	14.7	35.3	15.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

P-value : 0.000 < 0.05

### Understands public service environment

Table No. 17

	Private (%)	Public (%)	MNC (%)	Total (%)
Not at all	6.3	3.6	4.0	4.8
Infrequently	15.6	18.0	2.0	14.9
Occasionally	35.6	34.7	32.0	34.7
Often	26.9	34.7	42.0	32.4
Very often	15.6	9.0	20.0	13.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

P-value : 0.042 < 0.05

### Uses consensus building skills

Table No. 18

	Private (%)	Public (%)	MNC (%)	Total (%)
Not at all	9.4	8.2	0	7.7
Infrequently	19.4	12.9	4.1	14.5
Occasionally	28.8	33.5	20.4	29.8

Often	31.3	34.7	69.4	37.7
Very often	11.3	10.6	6.1	10.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

P-value : 0.000 < 0.05

For the comprehensive assessment of competencies all the competencies (31) prescribe in the dictionary of competencies for HR roles and positions were considered. Certain attributes made the same sense as the others which are described as follows:

- “Understands public service environment (Legislative/political) (External awareness or legal, governments and jurisprudence)” means approximately the same as “knows HR laws and policies (Legal, government and jurisprudence)”
- “Exhibits ethical behaviour (Integrity/Honesty)” means approximately the same as “Able to build trust relationships (Integrity/Honesty)” and “Practices and promotes integrity (Integrity/Honesty)”
- “Knows individual and team behaviour (Personnel/HR and Psychology)” means approximately the same as “Able to work in teams (Teamwork)”
- “Develops effective solution to mission requirements using principles and programs (Problem solving)” means approximately the same as “knows mission (Organizational awareness)”

Thereby the later ones were deleted in the analysis. 23 competencies as exhibited in the above tables do not have statistically significant difference at 5% level and are experienced by employees irrespective of the organisation's ownership. Thereby these competencies are universal, the other companies also could adapt it in the Indian context as a bench mark.

The following competencies had statistically significant difference and are not reported.

1. Able to make decisions
2. Applies mentoring, coaching and counseling skills to develop talent (Teaching others)
3. Applies organization development principles (Psychology : Industrial / Organizational)

4. Has analytical skills (Reasoning)
5. Promotes work life issues and integrates with result-oriented organizational planning process (managing diverse workforce and organizational awareness)
6. Understands clients and organizational culture (customer service)
7. Uses consultation and negotiation skills (conflict management)
8. Values, promotes and manages diversity (managing diverse workforce)

### Conclusion

The common thread found by the analysis was the behavioural perspective which deals with inter-personal relationship with the internal & external customers, soft skills, psychological binding and analytical skills were diverse with the Indian HR managers in their competencies assessment. Most of the practices were often as per 5 point rating in MNCs when compared to public and private ownership.

The question is not which competencies do we believe are required to perform the job, but which competencies do superior performers in a job possess and use? This comparative analysis provides answer to this question. Organizational success greatly improves upon who fit the organization, rather than the job. A person-to organization match provides an organization with the core competencies needed to maintain a competitive advantage by meeting the demands of a rapidly changing environment brought on by corporate restructuring and change initiatives.

Winning the war for talent has become a pragmatic issue of survival, and as this need has become more critical, well-trained HRM professionals are needed not only for foreign invested companies but also for local firms in India.

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