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## Transforming Human Resource Organizations: A Field Study of Future Competency Requirements

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## Abstract

As human resource organizations transform, staff competency requirements after significantly. The question is: to what? The present study attempts to answer this question using data gathered from knowledgeable observers within a single firm and employing a unique future-oriented, role focused methodology. The results suggest a competency model with three parts: a relatively small number of core competencies applicable across the full range of human resource roles studied, an even smaller number of leverage competencies applicable to half or more (but not all) of the roles, and a much larger number of competencies that are role specific. Leverage and roles specific competencies are combined into competency profiles for the various roles which, in turn, suggests a number of implications for the selection, development, and career progression of tomorrow's human resource managers and professionals. While this particular competency model and its implications may be situation specific, the methodology developed during the study can be readily replicated in an abbreviated form in virtually any organization.

## Keywords

human, resource, organization, staff, competency, model, profile, methodology, manager

## Comments

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## WORKING PAPER SERIES

# Transforming Human Resource Organizations: A Field Study of Future Competency Requirements

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Working Paper 95 – 28



**Transforming Human Resource Organizations:  
A Field Study of Future Competency Requirements**

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This paper has not undergone formal review or approval of the faculty of the ILR School. It is intended to make results of research, conferences, and projects available to others interested in human resource management in preliminary form to encourage discussion and suggestions.

### **Abstract**

As human resource organizations transform, staff competency requirements after significantly. The question is: to what? The present study attempts to answer this question using data gathered from knowledgeable observers within a single firm and employing a unique future-oriented, role focused methodology. The results suggest a competency model with three parts: a relatively small number of core competencies applicable across the full range of human resource roles studied, an even smaller number of leverage competencies applicable to half or more (but not all) of the roles, and a much larger number of competencies that are role specific. Leverage and roles specific competencies are combined into competency profiles for the various roles which, in turn, suggests a number of implications for the selection, development, and career progression of tomorrow's human resource managers and professionals. While this particular competency model and its implications may be situation specific, the methodology developed during the study can be readily replicated in an abbreviated form in virtually any organization.

Faced with volatile business environments and an increasing need to view employees as a major source of competitive advantage, many companies are rethinking their human resource strategies and, simultaneously, the contribution and capacities of their human resource organizations (HROs) (Boroski, 1990; Dyer, 1993; Dyer & Blancero, 1992; Dyer & Holder, 1988; Dyer & Kochan, in press; Kochan & Dyer, 1993; McIntosh-Fletcher, 1990; Schuler, 1990; SHRM Foundation, 1994; Smith, Boroski, & Davis, 1992; Ulrich & Lake, 1990; Walker, 1994). The resulting transformations naturally give rise to issues of staff competencies (Lawler, 1994; Lawson, 1990; Ulrich, Brockbank, & Yeung, 1989a, 1989b; Ulrich and Yeung, 1989). Specifically, what key competencies will be required to run tomorrow's HROs? How does the current staff measure up? What must be done to bring the staff up to speed?

The present study was designed to answer the first of these questions (in preparation for answering the others) for the HRO at Eastman Kodak (EK) Company. Teams consisting of company managers and professionals, assisted by researchers from the Center for Advanced Human Resource Studies (CAHRS) at Cornell University<sup>1</sup>, were formed to frame the study, define a vision for EK's HRO, describe the organization's future work in terms of performance requirements and behavioral illustrations, define key roles, and assess the essentiality of various competencies for performance in the key roles.

What emerged is a competency model with three components: (1) a relatively small number of core competencies applicable across the full range of roles studied, (2) an even smaller number of leverage competencies applicable to half or more (but not all) of the roles, and (3) a much larger number of competencies which are specific to particular roles. Leverage and role specific competencies combine in various ways to form unique competency profiles for key roles. While this particular competency model -- and its implications for selection, development, and career planning -- may be unique to EK, the methodology developed during the study can be readily replicated in an abbreviated form in virtually any organization.

### **Previous Research**

The study began with a review of previous research (including two proprietary studies obtained from other companies). Most notable among the published works were the studies conducted by Dave Ulrich and his colleagues at the University of Michigan (Ulrich, et al, 1989a&b; Ulrich & Yeung, 1989). Using a survey sample of over 10,000 participants, these researchers uncovered a host of critical competencies clustered into three categories: knowledge of business, delivery of human resources, and management of change. Also

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<sup>1</sup> Financial support for the study was provided by the Center for Advanced Human Resource Studies, and is gratefully acknowledged.

instructive was a much smaller survey (N = 70) done under the auspices of the SHRM Foundation (Lawson, 1990) in which the key competencies were lumped into five categories: goal and, action management, functional and organizational leadership, influence management, business knowledge, and human resource technical proficiencies. Other published (as well as proprietary) studies served to confirm the centrality of such general competencies as listening, communication, teamwork, confidence, and achievement orientation (Cockerill, 1989; Hunt & Meech, 1991).

As helpful as the earlier research was in helping to identify potentially key competencies, it also engendered several concerns. Most of the studies, for example, were anchored in the present, raising questions about their relevance to an HRO in the midst of transformation. Further, the studies tended to produce lengthy and imposing lists of requisite competencies which appeared to be of limited practical value. It seemed unlikely, for instance, that all the competencies on these lists could be of equal significance across the full range of HRO work, and yet the studies provided no apparent basis on which to make allocations or distinctions across various positions or roles. Finally, it was not clear in all instances that the respondents in the studies (even those that were company specific) possessed the knowledge required to make accurate judgments about competency requirements.

Given these concerns, the decision was made to build on previous efforts by conducting a company-specific, future-oriented, role-focused study using knowledgeable observers from both line and staff positions.

### **The Context: Changes at Eastman Kodak Company**

EK, not unlike many other companies, has been buffeted over the last decade by worldwide political turbulence, global economic restructuring, and formidable global competition. More demanding customers, accelerated change, and new information technologies have altered the dynamics of the marketplace for the company's key products. Environmental issues have come to the fore, while changing demographics have significantly altered the nature of the company's work force. The firm's capacity to adapt to constant change has become a critical issue (Maremont, 1995; Nulty, 1995).

Over the years numerous (and widely publicized) attempts were made to stabilize the firm's business condition and establish new strategic directions. There were repeated waves of restructuring and cost-cutting, as well as major workforce reductions, at first on a voluntary basis and later involving layoffs (shattering the last vestiges of employment security for employees). Throughout this period, but particularly as a new focus began to emerge (Maremont, 1995; Nulty, 1995), EK's HRO came under enhanced pressure to demonstrate

added value to the businesses and it became increasingly clear that traditional models were no longer appropriate. Thus began a serious process of functional revitalization under the rubric of HR Excellence. The HRO became engaged in a two-act play in which the two acts are conducted simultaneously. "On-Stage" there is the HRO's strategic mission, the process of partnering with line managers to develop integrated human resource strategies and systems to enhance organizational capability. "Off-Stage" is the infrastructure which support a successful on-stage performance: leadership, structures, mindset, roles, work processes, and staff. The present study was an "off-stage" process designed to support the broader transformation.

### **Methodology**

The study was conducted in three phases. Phase I generated a clarified vision of EK's future HRO, as well as an extensive list of HR competencies and related materials needed for subsequent phases. In Phase II, the nature of future HR work was examined and codified. Phase III consisted of consolidating the information gathered earlier and completing and analyzing competency ratings.

#### **Subjects**

To provide rigor, relevance, and acceptance, over 60 EK managers and professionals were involved in the study. Participants came from both line management and HR positions and from all three of the company's (then) major business groups (as well as CAHRS at Cornell University, as noted earlier). All participants were members of one or more of the following: A Design Team, a Review Panel, and a group of Role Experts.

**Design Team.** This team consisted of 12 representatives from the HROs in each business group, corporate human resources, and CAHRS. It designed the study, developed the criteria used to identify additional participants, and performed several analytical tasks as the study moved along.

**Review Panel.** This group had 21 members, including line managers as well as representatives from various HR subfunctions in the business groups and at corporate. Participants were identified as being particularly knowledgeable about, and adept in the application of, human resource policies and practices.

**Role Advisors.** There were 62 Role Advisors, including most members of the Design Team and the Review Panel. As before, those asked to serve as Role Advisors were specifically selected on the basis of their reputations as skilled people managers.



## Phase I

Phase I of the study was carried out by the Design Team and the Review Panel. It consisted of identifying, defining, and preparing: the HRO vision statement, performance requirements, behavioral illustrations, and competencies.

The HRO vision statement was crafted through a participative, iterative process focusing on emerging business directions. It incorporated three perspectives: the global business environment, EK's business environment, and the HR business environment. An initial version was drawn up by the Design Team and then made available to members of the Review Panel, as well as the larger HR community, along with an invitation to provide input based on the anticipated situations in their businesses. The resulting input was assessed and integrated into final form by the Design Team.

Performance requirements, defined as broad statements of expectations with respect to future HRO work, were developed to provide common reference points for the study participants. Design Team and Review Panel members collaborated on identifying the performance requirements, which were classified for convenience into four clusters derived from the Michigan (Ulrich, et al, 1989a&b) and SHRM (Lawson, 1990) studies: HR Leadership, Strategic Planning, Business Operations, and Organizational Change and Performance Improvement. The process was as follows: Participants were segmented into four groups, one for each cluster, and each group developed a draft list of performance requirements for its cluster. The group members (except for four designated leaders) then rotated to the next cluster and modified the initial list, and so on until each group had worked on all four clusters. The leaders remained with a single cluster throughout to explain the work done by the previous groups. Finally, each group returned to its initial cluster and, with the leader's assistance, created a final list of performance requirements of which there were, in the end, 26<sup>2</sup>.

Behavioral illustrations were used to add substance to the performance requirements. They were generated by members of the Design Team and Review Panel during a two day off-site workshop. Participants, working individually at personal computers equipped with groupware, generated examples of illustrative behaviors for the 26 performance requirements. Then, working outside the computer laboratory in rotating groups (as described above), the panelists assigned each behavioral illustration to a specific performance requirement at a specific level: basic, intermediate, or advanced. Back in the lab, the participants voted

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<sup>2</sup> An example of a performance requirement in the Strategic Planning cluster is *"Benchmarks organizational capability and integrates findings of 'best in class (internal/external)' into planning process"*. An example in the Human Resource leadership cluster is *"Accomplishes work through influence, competence, and leveraging of internal and external resources."*

electronically on the appropriateness of each of the assignments. Final resolution was accomplished through small group discussions (again, outside the lab).

Competencies are the knowledge, skills, abilities and other attributes required to perform desired future behaviors. As suggested earlier, an initial list of competencies was generated from previous research. The initial list was refined and the competencies defined by the CAHRS researchers, and a final list was then decided upon by the Design Team. The list included 96 competencies grouped for analytical convenience into eight categories: (1) managerial, (2) business, (3) technical, (4) inter- personal, (5) cognitive/ imaginative, (6) influence style, (7) organization, and (8) personal<sup>3</sup>.

Thus, at the conclusion of Phase I there were three products: a vision for the future HBO, 26 performance requirements each with behavioral illustrations at three levels (basic, intermediate, and advanced), and a list of 96 competencies with definitions.

## Phase II

This phase consisted of identifying and describing roles; that is, clusters of expected behavior patterns through which HR work of the future will be done. Roles were used rather than positions or jobs because they are more flexible and durable, and can be combined in various ways to constitute future positions (Lawler, 1994). Also, roles are not automatically associated with any particular organizational form or concept.

Role options were inferred from the vision statement and the performance requirements, as well as a general knowledge of lilt, future HR work . The final roles were identified by the Design Team, with input from the Review Panel. It was originally thought that eight to 12 roles would be appropriate, but considerable reflection and debate eventually pared the initial number to six: (1) Competency Practitioner, (2) Strategist/Generalist, (3) Initiative Leader, (4) Operational Support, (5) Consultant, and (6) Organization Leader. (Brief descriptions of these roles are provided at the tops of Tables 3 through 8<sup>4</sup>). These offered satisfactory face validity for the study, although additional roles may well as the HBO evolves.

Once the six roles were identified, members of the Design Team and Review Panel (again in a workshop format) assigned specific performance requirements to each one, thus providing concrete behavioral anchors to illustrate basic, intermediate, and advanced levels performance.

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<sup>3</sup> A full list of competencies and definitions, omitted here because of space limitations, is available from the first author.

<sup>4</sup> Full descriptions are available from the first author.

### **Phase III**

The final phase of the study involved rating the competencies associated with the various roles and deriving competency profiles for each role. Data were gathered from the 62 Role Advisors by means of a questionnaire which included brief role descriptions, along with the appropriate performance requirements and behavioral anchors. Role by role, each competency was rated on an eight-point scale containing five anchors: unnecessary (0), helpful (1), or essential (3 - low, 5 - moderate, 7 - high). Some Role Advisors considered all six roles; others (with less wide familiarity) were given subsets. The surveys were distributed internally and returned directly to the CAHRS researchers for analysis.

### **Results**

Critical or key competencies were defined as those rated most important across and within the six roles. Using reasonable, although arbitrary, cut-offs (explained below), the analysis captured 50 of the 96 original competencies. Further analysis produced an HR competency model with three components: core competencies, leverage competencies, and role competencies.

#### **Core Competencies**

Eleven competencies were identified as core because they were rated as among the most essential across all six roles (the across-role means ranged from 5.72 to 6.15). Table 1 lists and describes these competencies.

**Table 1: Core Competencies for Human Resource Roles**

Ran k	Competency	Mea n	Std. De.
1	ETHICS -- possesses fidelity to fundamental values (respect for the individual, responsibility of purpose & to constituencies, honesty, reliability, fairness, integrity, respect for property).	6.15	1.01
2	COMMUNICATION -- uses language, style and effective expression (including nonverbal) in speaking and writing so that others can understand and take appropriate action.	6.07	0.86
3	LISTENING -- able to interpret and use information extracted from oral communications.	5.94	0.85
4	RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING -- able to establish rapport, relationships and networks across a broad range of people & groups.	5.88	1.16
5	TEAMWORK -- understanding how to collaborate and foster collaboration among others.	5.87	1.10
6	STANDARDS OF QUALITY -- has high performance expectations for self and others.	5.84	1.02
7	JUDGMENT -- able to make rational and realistic decisions based on logical assumptions which reflect factual information.	5.82	0.91
8	RESULTS ORIENTATION -- knows how to work to get results.	5.80	1.06
9	INITIATIVE -- able to go beyond the obvious requirements for a situation.	5.76	1.11
10	SELF CONFIDENCE -- possesses a high degree of confidence in own abilities.	5.75	1.12
11	ENTHUSIASM & COMMITMENT -- able to believe in employer, find enjoyment and involvement in work, and to be committed to quality performance.	5.72	1.06

The core competencies, in turn, were judgmentally grouped into three clusters. The first cluster, personal integrity, includes three competencies: Ethics, Standards of Quality, and Good Judgement. Ambition and drive, the second cluster, contains four competencies: Results Orientation, Initiative, Enthusiasm, and Self Confidence. And the third cluster, team skills, also includes four competencies: Teamwork, Relationship Building, Communication, and Listening. The fact that there were only a small number of core competencies (11 of 96) validates the need to study competencies by roles rather than generically for an entire HRO. Obviously, many competencies are relatively important for only a subset of roles, or for none at all.

#### Leverage Competencies

Six competencies emerged as among the most important for three or four (but not all six) roles. These six competencies -Influence, Utilization of Resources, Customer Awareness, Creativity, Questioning, and Organizational Astuteness -- are defined in Table 2. They are called leverage competencies because selecting for or developing them provides flexibility in making assignments involving multiple roles. For example, the analysis showed that efforts to develop

Influence skills (a major cluster in the SHRM study [Lawson, 1990]) would facilitate assignments to, or performance in, four roles -- Competency Practitioner, Strategy/Generalist, Initiative Leader, and Consultant -- but, would add little of value with respect to the remaining two roles: Operational Support and Organizational Leader.

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### Table 2: Leverage Competencies

**Influence:** ability and skill to cause an effect in indirect ways. Ability to impact individuals and organizations without exercise of direct power or command.

**Utilization of resources:** able to find, acquire and leverage appropriate resources, inside or outside the organization.

**Customer awareness:** understands both internal and external customers and their needs.

**Creativity:** ability to invent, explore, imagine new approaches, frameworks, or solutions; ability to stimulate ideas in self or others.

**Questioning:** ability to gather and interpret objective information through skillful questioning of individuals and groups.

**Organizational astuteness:** understanding individual sensitivities, power dynamics, relationships, and how the organization operates.

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### Role Specific Competencies

In addition to the core and leverage competencies, there were 33 others which were unique or shared; that is, judged essential for only one or two roles. (These are defined, by role, in the Appendix.) Knowledge of Business Strategy, so prominent in the Michigan (Ulrich, et al, 1989a&b; Ulrich & Yeung, 1989) and SHRM (Lawson, 1990) studies, turned out to be a unique competency in this study, critical for only one role: Strategist/Generalist. Leadership, a commonly mentioned generic competency, emerged as a shared competency, showing up as important for just two roles: Initiative Leader and Organizational Leader.

### Competency Profiles

For each role, the ten most essential competencies (plus ties) -- leverage, shared, and unique (but not core) -- were used to construct a competency profile (the resulting profiles are shown in Tables 3 through 8). A brief discussion of these profiles follows:

**Competency Practitioner.** This role involves the development and implementation of creative HR solutions within an HR specific area (e.g., training or compensation). Technical knowledge in the specialty area is assumed. Beyond this, the role consists of 10 leverage and shared competencies and one unique competency (see Table 3). The generalizability of the

competencies in this role, along with their relatively low mean ratings (from 5.38 to 6.00) identifies the Competency Practitioner role as particularly useful preparation for additional role assignments (as noted below).

**Table 3**  
**Human Resource Competency Practitioner**

**HR Competency Practitioner** Role focus is to find, develop or implement creative options and approaches with area(s) of HR specialty, drawing upon diverse internal and external resources, and applying a broad, integrative HR and business perspective.

Rank	Competency	Mean	Std. De.
1	Utilization of resources	6.00	1.13
2	Customer awareness	5.77	1.19
3	Goal orientation	5.63	1.05
4	Creativity	5.63	1.03
5	Questioning	5.55	0.99
6	Anticipative thinking	5.45	1.06
7	Collaborative problem solving	5.45	1.36
8	Influence	5.42	1.11
9	Planning and organizing	5.40	0.71
<b>10</b>	<b>Analytical</b>	5.38	0.87
11	Flexibility	5.38	1.10

Note: all competencies in **bold face** are unique to the particular role

**Strategist/ Generalist.** This role is akin to the currently fashionable business partner concept (Dyer and Kochan, in press). As Table, 4 shows, it consists of five leverage and shared competencies -- Business Strategy, HR Planning, Vision, Organizational Change, and Value Creation -- and five unique competencies having to do with customer awareness and the ability to leverage resources to accomplish tasks. This is the third most demanding role, as indicated by the relatively high mean ratings across the ten competencies (5.93 to 6.24).

**Table 4**  
**Human Resource Strategist/Generalist**

**HR Strategist/Generalist** Role focus is to participate as a full partner on the business management team, design and implement strategic HR practices and systems to build organizational capability, and manage HR practices and services at the point of delivery.

Rank	Competency	Mean	Std. De.
<b>1</b>	<b>Business strategy</b>	<b>6.24</b>	<b>0.91</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Human resource planning</b>	<b>6.21</b>	<b>1.02</b>
3	Common vision	6.14	0.78
4	Customer awareness	6.10	0.93
<b>5</b>	<b>Vision</b>	<b>6.10</b>	<b>1.01</b>
6	Utilization of resources	6.10	0.91
<b>7</b>	<b>Organizational change</b>	<b>6.00</b>	<b>0.88</b>
8	Organizational astuteness	5.98	0.81
<b>9</b>	<b>Value creation</b>	<b>5.98</b>	<b>1.02</b>
10	Influence	5.93	1.26

Note: all competencies in **bold face** are unique to the particular role

**Initiative Leader.** Three unique competencies -- Project Management, Persistence, and Group Process -- essentially define this role which involves the championing of embryonic initiatives under often inhospitable conditions with no formal position power (see Table 5). Seven leverage and shared competencies, reflecting a strong goal orientation and the ability to marshal resources and exert influence, reinforce the role definition. Judging by the mean ratings across the 10 critical competencies, this is the second most demanding of the six roles.

**Table 5**  
**Human Resource Initiative Leader**

**HR Initiative Leader** Role focus is to lead the development of an experimental, embryonic, or pilot HR initiative, or guide a major initiative that requires significant attention and nurturing before mainstreaming into the organization.

Rank	Competency	Mean	Std. De.
<b>1</b>	<b>Project management</b>	<b>6.72</b>	<b>0.60</b>
2	Leadership	6.57	0.78
3	Utilization of resources	6.47	0.68
4	Influence	6.30	0.94
5	Planning and organizing	6.27	0.78
<b>6</b>	<b>Persistence</b>	<b>6.20</b>	<b>0.69</b>
7	Goal orientation	6.15	0.95
8	Creativity	6.00	0.78
9	Presentation	5.92	0.92
<b>10</b>	<b>Group process</b>	<b>5.92</b>	<b>1.00</b>

Note: all competencies in **bold face** are unique to the particular role



**Operational Support.** As shown in Table 6, this role incorporates traditional employee relations and employee advocate activities. It requires five unique competencies: Individual Counseling (the most highly rated), Interpersonal Awareness, Use of Time, Computer Skills, and Policy Interpretation. Leverage and shared competencies involve Customer Awareness, an Objective and Questioning demeanor, as well as Flexibility and Tolerance for Stress. The relatively low mean ratings across these competencies (5.22 to 5.83) suggests this as an entry-level role assignment.

**Table 6**  
**Human Resource Operational Support**

**HR Operational Support** Role focus is to provide broad operational support for HR work and processes, and work closely with employees to meet their HR transactional or company-related needs.

Rank	Competency	Mean	Std. De.
<b>1</b>	<b>Individual counseling</b>	<b>5.83</b>	<b>1.38</b>
2	Flexibility	5.59	0.77
3	Objectivity	5.50	0.99
4	Questioning	5.44	1.45
<b>5</b>	<b>Interpersonal awareness</b>	<b>5.34</b>	<b>1.42</b>
6	Tolerance for stress	5.30	1.20
<b>7</b>	<b>Use of time</b>	<b>5.30</b>	<b>0.94</b>
8	Customer awareness	5.27	1.38
<b>9</b>	<b>Computer</b>	<b>5.24</b>	<b>1.37</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>Policy interpretation</b>	<b>5.22</b>	<b>1.32</b>

Note: all competencies in **bold face** are unique to the particular role

**Consultant.** Table 7 shows the competencies most critical for this role. The mean ratings are only moderately high (5.75 to 6.45) making this the fourth most challenging role. The role incorporates three unique competencies: Organizational Analysis, Organizational Behavior, and Conceptual Skills. The eight leverage and shared competencies suggest the need for Intellectual Curiosity, the ability to Exert Influence in Collaborative Problem-Solving settings, and Creativity.

**Table 7**  
**Human Resource Consultant**

**HR Consultant** Role focus is to use broad business perspective, HR practice knowledge, and expert process skills to assist individuals and organizations in discovering needs, options, and solutions related to human and organizational issues.

Rank	Competency	Mean	Std. De.
1	Questioning	6.45	0.66
2	Influence	5.98	1.27
3	Creativity	5.91	0.88
4	Organizational astuteness	5.84	1.20
<b>5</b>	<b>Organizational analysis</b>	<b>5.82</b>	<b>1.24</b>
6	Collaborative problem-solving	5.82	1.30
<b>7</b>	<b>Organizational behavior</b>	<b>5.80</b>	<b>1.09</b>
8	Anticipative thinking	5.77	1.18
9	Presentation	5.77	0.89
10	Objectivity	5.75	0.89
<b>11</b>	<b>Conceptual</b>	<b>5.75</b>	<b>0.89</b>

Note: all competencies in **bold face** are unique to the particular role

**Organization Leader.** Not surprisingly, this was seen as the most challenging role (mean ratings of the most important competencies run from 6.17 to 6.77). It also garnered six unique competencies, which is more than any other role, perhaps because 't is the only role which involves formal position power and the management of subordinates. Leadership, a shared competency, anchors the top of the ratings; the unique competencies which fall below (in descending order) are: Role Model, Empowerment, Development of Others, Coaching, Feedback, and Personal Resiliency. Common Vision, Organizational Astuteness, and Tolerance for Stress complete the package. (See Table 8.)

**Table 8**  
**Human Resource Organization Leader**

**HR Organization Leader** Role focus is to orchestrate people, teams, structure, processes, and resources in HR units consisting of multiple/diverse functions and roles, or specialized HR practices or functional services.

Rank	Competency	Mean	Std. De.
1	Leadership	6.77	0.42
2	<b>Role model</b>	<b>6.57</b>	<b>0.55</b>
3	<b>Empowerment</b>	<b>6.45</b>	<b>0.64</b>
4	<b>Development of others</b>	<b>6.38</b>	<b>0.59</b>
5	Tolerance for stress	6.35	0.70
6	Common vision	6.27	0.64
7	Coaching	6.27	0.68
8	Feedback	6.26	0.72
9	<b>Personal resiliency</b>	<b>6.25</b>	<b>0.71</b>
10	Organization astuteness	6.17	1.01

Note: all competencies in bold face are unique to the particular role

### Discussion

These results, as noted, suggest a competency model with three components. The first consists of 11 core competencies, applicable across all roles, which fall neatly into three clusters: personal integrity, ambition and drive, and team skills. The existence of a relatively small number of core competencies indicates a less daunting baseline for entry and accomplishment in EK's future HRO than would have been assumed based on the undifferentiated lists generated by the Michigan (Ulrich, et al, 1989a&b; Ulrich & Yeung, 1989) and SHRM (Lawson, 1990) studies. Core competencies are those which EK must constantly look for when selecting candidates for HR positions, and on which it would be logical to assess current HR managers and professionals to identify potentially widespread development needs.

The second component of the competency model consists of six leverage competencies (refer again to Table 2). These, too, are strong candidates to guide selection and development activities, but are more particular to certain role sets. For example, candidates for or incumbents in positions involving Consultant, Strategist/Generalist, and Initiative Leader roles require Influence skills (in all three cases) and high-level competence with respect to the Utilization of Resources (Strategist/Generalist and Initiative Leader), Creativity (Consultant and Initiative Leader), and Organizational Astuteness (Consultant and Strategist/Generalist). Candidates for positions involving these any of these three roles might benefit from a tour of duty in a position involving a Competency Practitioner role since 't incorporates three of these four leverage competencies (the exception is Organizational Astuteness) and does so at lower levels of importance than is required by the more advanced roles.

The third component of the competency model is made up of competencies shared by just two roles (N - 10) or unique to a particular role (N - 23). These, in combination with the appropriate leverage competencies, make up role-specific competency profiles (as shown in Tables 3 through 8); these are potentially useful for more targeted selection, placement, development, and career management activities. For example, the competency profiles for the Operational Support and Competency Practitioner roles show relatively low mean ratings, suggesting that both are logical entry points into the HRO of the future. Performance of the Operational Support role, however, provides relatively little development for movement into other roles ('t involves only two leverage and three shared competencies), whereas performance of the Competency Practitioner role provides lower-level experience in five leverage competencies (as noted earlier), as well as five shared competencies.

The Consultant role provides some development for higher-level roles; it shares two leverage competencies (Influence and Organizational Astuteness) with the Strategist/Generalist role and two leverage competencies (Influence and Creativity) and one shared competency (Presentation) with the Initiative Leader role. The Strategist/ Generalist and Initiative Leader roles both involve Influence and Utilization of Resources, but interestingly they share none of the shared competencies.

Six of the 10 competencies required for the most demanding role, Organization Leader, are unique. Of the remaining four, only one (Organizational Astuteness) is a leverage competency (developed by the Consultant and Strategist/ Generalist roles), while the rest are shared competencies, one each with the Operational Support (Tolerance for Stress), Strategist/Generalist (Common Vision), and Initiative Leader (Leadership) roles. Thus, an

important issue for consideration is how Organizational Leaders of the future will be developed.

#### Implications for Research

The results of the present study are difficult to compare with those of previous studies because of major differences in focus, sample, and methods. It is a matter of judgement as to which of the various approaches, if any, offers the best potential for accumulating knowledge on this topic.

Nonetheless, at an absolute minimum, subsequent research on HR competencies should be anchored in the future, rather than the present, given the rapid changes taking place in most HROs these days. Further, it seems safe to suggest that more care should be exercised in selecting respondents and anchoring their responses than has typically been the case. The present study benefited considerably from the use of carefully chosen participants at each step and from the use of the vision statement and the performance requirements and behavioral illustrations as common bases for the competency ratings. (In contrast, the authors are aware of a company in which a random set of line managers were simply asked, without specified context or anchors, to rate a set of competency requirements for HR people. The results were predictable: a focus on the status quo, notwithstanding the HRO's intended strategy of moving to a more business-oriented role, and only moderate agreement across raters as to the importance of various competencies.)

Broad surveys, -if well-designed, have the advantage of generalizability. But, they must be constructed in a way that avoids the common tendency to produce lengthy and imposing lists of generic competencies which, even if bundled, offer little in the way of useful guidance with respect to selection, placement, development, and career planning. More differentiated lists could be constructed if the surveys used samples which focused on HROs that share reasonably common visions, performance requirements, and roles. But, this may not be feasible.

The more pragmatic alternative may lie in replications of the present study (appropriately modified to fit extant circumstances). And, in fact, the methodology was specifically constructed to encourage this. Many HROs have vision statements and, based on these, could easily adapt the EK performance requirements and behavioral illustrations as needed. The list of 96 competencies (with definitions) would probably require little modification, and the questionnaire is available for the asking<sup>5</sup>. Such replications have the added advantage of enhancing the likelihood that the results will be used because of face validity, and because many of the potential users can be involved in the process.

Finally, future research should focus on application. While the results of the various competency studies are interesting and informative, the acid test is whether or not they contribute significantly to improving the performance of future HR managers and professionals and, in turn, to business success.

#### Implications for Practice

Notwithstanding the need for further research, the present study has a number of implications for practice, certainly within EK and perhaps within other organizations as well. (A company document entitled HR Excellence: Building Our Competencies to Become Enablers of Culture Change and Business Revitalization, which summarizes the implications of the present study for EK, is available from the second author.)

Collectively, it is now clear, HR managers and professionals require a broad arsenal of competencies. But, all require only a relatively small subset of core and, perhaps, leverage competencies. Beyond these, what is required depends on the roles to which these individuals are, or will be, assigned.

For example, organizations undertaking a major initiative (such as the revitalization effort of which this study was a part) might require a person to be the Initiative Leader. Table 5 suggests the requisite competencies. Three of these -- Project Management, Persistence, and Group Process -- are unique, and therefore unlikely to have been developed to the requisite levels in previous assignments. Either formal or on-the-job training would probably be required. Of the remaining seven key competencies, six are important, although to a lesser extent, for the Competency Practitioner role, suggesting a search for candidates among those who have demonstrated excellence in that role. Individuals with experience in the Consultant role would have honed their Influence skills and Creativity to higher levels. The same is true of those with experience in the Strategist/Generalist role with respect to Influence skills and Utilization of Resources.

Or consider the desire to develop a career path leading to the Strategist/Generalist (or business partner) role (see Table 4). Again, assignments in Competency Practitioner roles would begin to develop three requisite competencies: Influence, Utilization of Resources, and Customer Awareness. A stint in the Consultant role would further sharpen Influence skills and help to develop Organizational Astuteness. But, this leaves six key competencies -- Knowledge of Business Strategy, Human Resource Planning, Vision (strategic focus), Organizational Change, Value Creation, and Common Vision (the ability to show how broader ideas support broader goals and values) -- to be developed in other ways.

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<sup>5</sup> Again, from the first author.

Further, the data shown in Table 8 suggest that role assignments are only marginally helpful in developing the key competencies required by Organizational Leaders. The Consultant and Strategist/Generalist roles develop Organizational Astuteness, and the former also helps to hone a Common Vision. Leadership is fostered by the Initiative Leader role, as is Tolerance for Stress by the Operational Support role, albeit at a much lower level than is required of Organizational Leaders (the means are 5.30 and 6.35, respectively). This suggests a need for focused training in several key competencies, specifically regarding the management of subordinates (Role Model, Empowerment, and the like; or for importing Organizational Leaders from leadership positions outside the HRO. The latter possibility is suggested by the fact that the Competency Practitioner role, which offers the broadest development by far (with five leverage and five shared competencies), develops no key competencies for the Organizational Leader role. Another possibility, of course, lies in redefining roles in ways which deliberately develop leadership competencies.

Some (e.g., Lawler, 1994) raise the possibility of using competencies in the development of performance appraisal instruments and even compensation plans. The present study suggests that these may represent attempts to reach beyond the grasp, at least within HROs, primarily because so few key competencies are essential to the performance of all or most of key future roles.

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**Appendix**  
**Definitions of role competencies<sup>6</sup>**  
**(does not include core or leveraged competencies)**

**Competency Practitioner**

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Goal Orientation -- ability to enter situations and act with specific objectives in mind.

Anticipative thinking -- understands the likely consequences or implications of actions or events.

Collaborative problem solving -- able to engage the talents of knowledgeable people or teams in problem solving.

Planning and organizing -- ability to identify options, and establish courses of action, goals, methods, and resources for self and others.

**Analytical -- able to systematically and rationally approach tasks, situations, or problems.**

Flexibility -- can adapt positively to changes.

**Strategist/Generalist**

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**Business strategy -- knows business strategy.**

**Human resource planning -- knowledge of Kodak's human resource planning framework and processes, and how they integrate with business planning.**

Common vision -- ability to show how one's ideas support the organization's broader goals or values, or appeal to higher principles such as fairness.

**Vision -- able to maintain strategic focus; projecting trends and visualizing possible and probable futures and their implications.**

**Organizational change --the skill to facilitate, initiate, support and/or manage effective organizational change consistent with organizational needs.**

**Value creation -- understanding and awareness of where opportunities exist or can be made to exist, by which the community can deliver services that add value to the business.**

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<sup>6</sup> Note that competencies in bold are unique competencies.

### **Human Resource Initiative Leader**

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**Project management -- know how to lead, plan, organize, prioritize, and monitor work projects.**

Leadership -- uses appropriate interpersonal styles and methods to guide and inspire individuals or groups toward task and goal accomplishment.

Planning and organizing -- ability to identify options, and establish courses of action, goals, methods, and resources for self and others.

**Persistence -- ability to make repeated efforts to overcome obstacles.**

Goal orientation -- ability to enter situations and act with specific objectives in mind.

Presentation -- knows how to effectively present information in diverse circumstances.

**Group process - understanding of group dynamics and ability to facilitate group process.**

### **Human Resource Operational Support**

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**Individual counseling -- knowledge of how to help individuals recognize and understand personal needs, values, problems, action alternatives and goals.**

Flexibility -- can adapt positively to changes.

Objectivity -- able to recognize the merits of different positions in conflict situations.

**Interpersonal awareness -- ability to identify other people's concerns and to position one's ideas to address these concerns.**

Tolerance for stress -- able to maintain stability of performance under pressure and/or opposition.

**Use of time -- is able to effectively manage own time, and to manage demands on others so as to respect the value of their time.**

**Computer -- knowledge of computer systems and processes used at Kodak. Personal computer literacy.**

**Policy interpretation -- the ability to develop acceptable decisions about the applications of Kodak policy on an operating level that adhere to the intent of the policy while allowing reasonable flexibility.**

### **Human Resource Consultant**

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**Organizational analysis -- understanding of the basic principles, methodologies, and processes of organizational analysis and change.**

Collaborative problem-solving -- able to engage the talents of knowledgeable people or teams in problem solving.

**Organizational behavior -- knowledge of organizational behavior theories and concepts, i.e., understanding of how organizations work.**

Anticipative thinking -- understands the likely consequences or implications of actions or events.

Presentation -- knows how to effectively present information in diverse circumstances.

Objectivity -- able to recognize the merits of different positions in conflict situations.

**Conceptual -- the ability to conceive ideas, patterns, images or relationships from limited data or elements.**

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### **Human Resource Organization Leader**

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Leadership -- uses appropriate interpersonal styles and methods to guide and inspire individuals or groups toward task and goal accomplishment.

**Role model -- able to demonstrate key HR capabilities through day to day behavior (for example, accountability, action orientation, continuous learning, customer focus, diversity, empowerment, integration, leadership.)**

**Empowerment -- ability to create an environment which encourages and enables individuals to exercise their personal power and talents, and take responsibility for their actions.**

**Development of others -- able to develop the competencies of teams or individuals, using a wide variety of methods and tools.**

Tolerance for stress -- able to maintain stability of performance under pressure and/or opposition.

Common vision -- ability to show how one's ideas support the organization's broader goals or values, or appeal to higher principles such as fairness.

**Coaching -- knowing how to use effective approaches to help individuals in their job tasks.**

**Feedback - able to provide information to individuals about their behavior and performance so that they can act on it.**

**Personal resiliency - ability to adapt to change or stress by articulating and committing to a personal vision, generating realistic alternatives to problems/situations, and exercising appropriate control.**