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“Why Cookie Cutter Competency Models Don’t Work”

by Nancy E. Parsons

Too often, *cookie cutter* competency models limit leadership potential and performance and sometimes derail business strategy. Force-fitting an executive competency template limits talent, subjectively reduces the candidate pool, fuels artificial performance accountabilities, and narrows business perspective.

Some executive competency models describe a fictional character more than a realistic high performing executive. Leaders are people with specific strengths and *real* short sides. They cannot be all to all. Both strengths and gaps need to be understood in order to increase effectiveness. The art of executive performance planning is to assure that an executive *team* has a sufficient array of strengths and gifts, can neutralize vulnerabilities and, together, can pave the way to new levels of success.

A competency menu that attracts, balances, and rewards diverse talent and leader character attributes will define competitive advantage. Because a broad *menu* approach welcomes a wider range of leadership talent, this method

- ☑ is inherently open to more ideas and practical achievements
- ☑ promotes a wider range of communication styles leading to improved effectiveness and better relationships
- ☑ rejuvenates, identifies and stimulates growth of a wider talent pool
- ☑ adapts to dynamic needs and competitive forces more readily
- ☑ is more objective and open rather than promoting exclusive “*club members*” or political alliances
- ☑ responds well to changing customer needs and reflects the rich diversity of a global customer base and
- ☑ yields better potential for delivering measurable results.

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