



Competencies for Senior/Executive Level HR Professionals
PPT—Session 7: Critical Evaluation
Instructor Notes

Slide 1 - Competencies for Senior/Executive Level HR Professionals

This session on Critical Evaluation is a continuation of a series following four early-career-level sessions and two mid-career-level sessions. This precedes two more senior- and executive-career-level sessions.

Materials for This Session:

Assign any additional readings that you believe will enhance the classroom learning experience. Assign in advance as necessary, and integrate into the conversation where appropriate. Look for new developments in business, legislation and other HR current events that will lend themselves to supporting the content.

However, the foundation of these sessions is the extensively researched and validated SHRM Competency Model. You are cautioned to not “add in” things you think should be there but are not included. Nor should you omit segments you do not find as valuable. The entire model fits together like pieces of a puzzle. Adding your own pieces, or intentionally leaving some out, would change the entire picture of the puzzle and be problematic in terms of the original validation research of the model. Explain and clarify so students grasp and retain the material, but do not expand or contract.

Reading Assignments

Article: *Critical Evaluation: Put Your Analytics into Action*

<https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-magazine/pages/0116-competencies-critical-evaluation-harris.aspx>

Report: *Workforce Readiness and Skills Shortages*

<https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/trends-and-forecasting/labor-market-and-economic-data/Documents/Workforce%20Readiness%20and%20Skills%20Shortages.pdf>

Slide 2 - Due this Session

- Review what is due today.
- Ask students if they have any questions about the content covered in Session 6.

Slide 3 - Course Purpose

- Review the course purpose on the slide.
- Point out that this first session of the senior-career course is a continuation of SHRM's Competency Model.
- Stress that although the model includes nine competencies, we have already focused on six competencies and are now looking at the first one most essential for senior-level HR practitioners—Critical Evaluation.
- The course is geared toward graduate- and undergraduate-level students, because it is just an overview of the senior-level competencies.
- The session we are about to cover was designed with an intent to be included in larger university programs (such as BBA programs).

Slide 4 - Course Structure

- Three sessions as outlined on this slide.
- The senior-career-level course comprises three 75-minute sessions. Time is very limited, so you will focus the content on high-level descriptions of the competencies and on a few practical exercises that will help students understand what these competencies “look like” in practice.
- The course includes prereading, which students should have already completed.
- The three senior-level competencies covered in the three sessions are the following:
 - Critical Evaluation, today’s topic.
 - Leadership and Navigation, to be covered in Session 8.
 - Global and Cultural Effectiveness, to be covered in Session 9.

Slide 5 - Session 7: Lessons

- Review the lessons covered in today’s session.
- Note: SHRM subject-matter experts carefully chose the content and activities for the three sessions. We also fully appreciate that instructors enjoy bringing their own perspectives and content to the course. You are free to add in more mini-cases, articles or any other content you see fit to drive the learning outcomes. Please ensure that any additional materials have proper citations and do not infringe on any copyright laws.
- Depending on how many optional activities you add, you may need to expand how much time is devoted to today’s lesson.

Slide 6 - Course Introduction and Critical Evaluation Competency

- Remind students: By now you have covered four early-career-level competencies and two mid-career-level competencies.
- Students should be very familiar with the next slide (an overview of the SHRM Competency Model). However, require students who missed the earlier career modules to go back and review the six prior competencies as external self-study.
- Ask students to share their impressions of the way the first six competencies covered so far fit together.
- Ask them what appears to still be missing.

- Ask them before covering today's content, "What do you think Critical Evaluation means?" (Revisit this during the wrap-up at the conclusion of the session.)
- Tell them their perspective will evolve even further by the time they finish this module.

Slide 7 - Learning Objectives

- Review the learning objectives
- Emphasize that the course is intended to give students opportunities to apply the concepts they are studying and to see what these concepts "look like" when practiced in the field of HR.
- Ask students: "What do you hope to get out of this first senior-career session?"

Slide 8 - Overview of SHRM's Competency Model

- Ask students: "By a show of hands, how many of you completed the early-career module on the first four competencies of HR and the mid-career module on the two mid-level competencies?"
 - The next slide will be an overview of the model for students who have not completed the early- and mid-career modules. Require these students to review the six prior competencies as external self-study.
 - Ask the rest of the students to share some of the things they learned and how their perspective of the field of HR has changed.
- Ask students before covering today's content, "What do you think Critical Evaluation means?" (Revisit this during the wrap-up at the conclusion of the session.)
 - Tell them their perspective will evolve even further by the time they finish the module.

Slide 9 – SHRM Competency Model

- Review the SHRM Competency Model (we will present the definitions, descriptions and further information in other slides).
- See if the students are clear about the distinctions between the nine HR competencies.
- Point out again that from this point forward in the class, we will be focusing on the first competency relevant to senior/executive-level HR professionals (Critical Evaluation.)
- Remind them that this competency is considered a nontechnical, or behavioral, competency.
- Remind them a technical competency represents what you know, whereas behavioral competencies represent how you convert your knowledge into observable behaviors. Success is not just about what you know, but also about how you *use* the knowledge you possess.

Slide 10 – Levels of Experience

- Students have seen this graphic before, multiple times: It depicts the career of HR professionals as they gain more experience.
- When explaining the graphic, tell students that the graphics with the number in them represent years of experience (e.g., Mid 3-7 denotes three to seven years of experience).
- Also point out that most people in HR begin their career as a specialist in some function (e.g., a compensation specialist), and as they gain experience, they learn about other specialties. Ultimately they may advance through their specialty, but typically executive-level HR professionals have to be knowledgeable about all HR functions.

Slide 11 - Importance of the Competency

- Understanding how the many thousands of SHRM members rated the importance of the various competencies provides needed perspective to the students.
- Seeing the ratings is a useful career management tool, because it will help students understand what they need to master and the benefits of doing so, or the drawbacks of not doing so.

Slide 12 - Importance Rating Scale

- Taken from p. 138 of the book *Defining HR Success: 9 Critical Competencies for HR Professionals*.
- Review the slide.

Slide 13 - Required Upon Entry (RUE)

- The “Required Upon Entry” rating is also based on feedback from the surveyed SHRM members and tells students what they need to have mastered (mostly) by which stage of their career, again providing a roadmap for career advancement, a guide for future studies and perspective.

Slide 14 - RUE Rating Scale

- Taken from p. 138 of the book *Defining HR Success: 9 Critical Competencies for HR Professionals*.
- Stress as noted on the slide: You must already have this competency when you arrive at the respective level.

Slide 15 - Ratings

- Taken from p. 162 of the book *Defining HR Success: 9 Critical Competencies for HR Professionals*.
- Give students a few moments to review the table.
- Ask them for their observations.
- If needed, point out the higher ratings of the Importance and RUE scores now that we are at the senior level and have advanced from early- to mid-level and from mid-level to senior/executive levels.
- Ask, “What do these findings mean?”
 - These findings indicate that HR professionals will gradually develop this competency throughout their careers, so they will be ready when they reach more responsible levels.
 - The findings also indicate that they cannot neglect the development of this general behavioral competency in the belief that focusing on developing their HR skills is more important. Critical evaluation is a skill they *must* develop to be successful in senior-level HR positions.
- Ask, “What happens if HR professionals are not proficient in this competency?”
 - Potential answer: HR professionals seen as lacking in Critical Evaluation, or as appearing not to have it in a job interview, may not be promoted or hired into the roles they want.
- Tell students: The SHRM Competency Model can be a helpful roadmap for your career and future studies, because you now know what you need and when you need it.
- The more senior your role in an organization, the more critical is your ability to reason logically and truly be a thinker. Building a body of experience, while important, will never be enough on

its own. You will be challenged by new things, you will have to extrapolate from similar experiences, you will have to gather information and assess it effectively, and you will have to start doing this earlier in your career so you are ready to do it when the burden rests on your shoulders.

Slide 16 - Definition and Components of the Critical Evaluation Competency

- Begin by asking the students what they think of when they hear the words “critical evaluation.” Some typical responses may include:
 - To thoroughly examine an issue.
 - Critical means high stakes, and evaluation means assessment—meaning an assessment, the results of which will affect the organization for a long time to come.
 - Having high standards and being “critical” of what they see and deal with in daily interactions.

These may be reasonable conclusions based solely on the words “critical evaluation,” but the competency is much more.

- Ask students to describe a person they have worked with who demonstrates strong critical evaluation skills (the person does not have to work in HR).
 - Have them describe the specific things this person did that led them to believe the person had good critical evaluation skills.
 - How did this person show that he or she was performing a serious and thorough analysis of the issues faced?
 - How did this person apply the knowledge he or she had?
 - What kinds of benefits did the students observe from the person applying his or her knowledge?

Slide 17 - Critical Evaluation Definition

- Review the definition provided.
- Elaborate on this information if you sense doing so is required for understanding.

Slide 18 - Critical Evaluation Description

- Review the description provided.
- Elaborate on this information if you sense doing so is required for understanding.
- When reviewing the description, remind students that Critical Evaluation does not mean paralysis by analysis. You can gather only so much information, and that information will never be quite perfect. But your educated best guess should be well informed and reflect what you know matters most to your organization.
- *Optional activity:* If time permits, divide students into small groups; ask them to discuss ways in which they have recently used the three skills on the slide in their work experience, or where they have observed the skills used.

Slide 19 - Critical Evaluation Examples

- Remind students that they will have a duty to develop the next generation of HR professionals.
- Critical Evaluation is like a muscle; it gets stronger with use.
- After the students look over the examples provided, ask them if they can think of other examples of how Critical Evaluation manifests itself in the workplace. Do not spend a lot of time on their examples, since you are about to review the subcompetencies and the behaviors.
- Now that they have seen the formal definition, description and examples of the Critical Evaluation competency, ask students to share an example of someone they knew who *lacked* Critical Evaluation abilities and how it adversely effected their office, department, store, etc.

Slide 20 - Critical Evaluation Subcompetencies

- Remind students that a subcompetency is related to the general competency and may be subsumed by the general competency.
- Choose a few of the subcompetencies on the slide that you think are particularly important to successfully using Critical Evaluation, and provide your perspective on why these are so important. For example:
 - For measurement and assessment skills, you can refer to the prereading assignments.
 - For curiosity and inquisitiveness, you can ask, “How can curiosity and inquisitiveness benefit an organization?”
 - For auditing skills, you can ask, “Why are auditing skills needed, and what should HR professionals do to build and maintain their auditing skills?”
 - For knowledge management, you might talk about how important it is that you stay abreast of new technical developments that can give you new capabilities in managing your knowledge, especially when *knowledge transfer* is such a big concern for organizations expecting waves of retirement among their Baby Boom employees.
 - For objectivity, you might tell students that HR professionals have to be skillful at being friendly with everyone, while being friends with no one. This practice is the only way they can truly maintain an objective outlook for when (not if but *when*) an employee or management issue occurs. In these situations, HR professionals must be calm, objective and dispassionate about the issue and assess the situation on the merit of the facts. HR staff members also find themselves at times needing to conduct formal investigations, the results of which might have legal ramifications, and these situations definitely require objectivity.

Slide 21 - Critical Evaluation Behaviors

- Discuss the Critical Evaluation behaviors with the students.
- Ask them to pick a few that they feel are critical to successfully implement the subcompetencies. For example:
 - For critical thinking, they might point out that “gathers critical information” and “analyzes data with a keen sense for what is useful” are two key behaviors that allow you to be successful.

- As an alternative (if time allows), you could turn this into a quick activity. Before class, print out the list of behaviors, and cut the paper into strips with one behavior on each strip. Place the strips into a bowl. There are 10 behaviors, so ask for 10 volunteers. Have each draw a behavior from the bowl. Have each volunteer read his or her behavior out loud and then match it to one of the subcompetencies (it would help if you flip back to the subcompetency slide for this part of the activity). Once students pair the behavior they chose to a subcompetency, ask the rest of the class if that behavior could also support other subcompetencies.
- Continue until all 10 students have matched their behaviors to at least one subcompetency.
- An accelerated version of this is to just have four or five students pick a behavior from the bowl, not covering all the behaviors.
- A real-world example of applying the Critical Evaluation competency is HR's handling of the impacts of the Affordable Care Act and the recent changes to the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) exempt classification requirements. HR practitioners must share their knowledge of the changes in the laws, collaborate with appropriate team members (inside and outside of HR) to analyze potential effects and organizational responses, and keep their organization up-to-date when changes take effect.

Slide 22 - Ways to Develop Critical Evaluation Skills

- Have the students review the ideas on the slide for developing Critical Evaluation skills.
- Encourage them to provide additional ideas for how to develop skills to master this competency.
- Point out that the SHRM Competency Model emphasizes the need for HR professionals to be perpetual, lifelong learners. Graduating with their degree is only the beginning of their education, not the end.
- Remind students that their prereading article "Critical Evaluation: Put Your Analytics into Action" focuses on debating different points of view through the involvement of members of different teams (number 1) and developing HR metrics skills (number 7).
- Numbers 1, 3, 4 and 9 are particularly important because they serve as the basis for the Great Debate activity in the "Developing the Critical Evaluation Competency" document. Be sure to point out these methods, and possibly ask a question or two focused on them.
- HR is a field in which there are often many options available and there is no *one* right way to do things. The upcoming activity will allow students to consider multiple viewpoints on a common HR topic and weigh the pros and cons of each.

Slide 23 - Application of the Critical Evaluation Competency

- As we just said, critical evaluation is like a muscle, it gets stronger as you use it. Now it is time to "exercise."

Slide 24 - Activity

- Refer to the document "Applying the Critical Evaluation Competency" for complete activity guidance.
- If students are not already divided to groups (approximately an even division of the class), divide them now.

- Choose which of the groups will be the pros and which will be the cons.
- Assign either one of the suggested debate topics, or choose one of your own.
- Give the class eight minutes to list as many of the debate topic's pros or cons as they can think of.
- Circulate unobtrusively, and make observations to comment on during the wrap-up.
- Do not get involved in the conversation. Let it happen. Everyone will share after.

Slide 25 – Activity: Debrief

- Discuss your observations. Ask the students how they would feel dealing with these scenarios in the real world.
- Refer to the document “Applying the Critical Evaluation Competency” for complete activity guidance.
- These events are examples of the kinds of challenges HR professionals and leadership teams face every day.

Slide 26 - Rapid Recap

- Recap the key points about the Critical Evaluation competency as outlined on the slide.
- Ask students the following questions:
 - Now that we've learned more about Critical Evaluation, what do you think it means?
 - How has your perspective changed?
 - What have you gained a new appreciation for?
 - Did anything cause you to be skeptical?

Slide 27 - Rapid Recap (continued)

- Ask, “What do you think of the Importance and RUE ratings for Critical Evaluation now that you know more about the competency and have completed the activity?”
- The value and usefulness of Critical Evaluation may be limited in the early-career stages, but the seeds of a larger perspective are planted in the early stages.
- Learning the skills and knowledge associated with a practitioner HR role may be critical in the early- and mid-career phases, but being able to gradually fit that knowledge and work into the big picture is what carries a practitioner along the path to senior- and executive-level roles.

Slide 28 - Benefits, Challenges and Risks

- Review the benefits, challenges and risks outlined on the slide.
- As you cover these, address each in the context of the individual, the HR department and the organization as a whole. Students should attempt to look at each competency using these three perspectives as best they can at this point in their education/career.
- Doing this exercise helps students consider the following:
 - Their HR career roadmap.
 - How they would lead and develop an HR department/team.
 - How they would contribute to an organization as a true business partner.

Slide 29 - Weaknesses

- Review the impact that weakness in this competency can have, as outlined on the slide.
- Ask students to share where they think they are now, and how they can develop strength in this area.

Slide 30 - Due Next Session

- Remind students about assignments due for the next session for Leadership and Navigation.
- Ask students if they have any remaining questions from today's session.