

# Cases on Human Performance Improvement Technologies

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# Chapter 12

## A Competency–Based Performance System in a Health Care IT Setting

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*DiversiCorp Communications grew extremely fast to support Red Oak Health System’s enterprise IT needs. Often promoting strong performers from within, DiversiCorp leadership recognized that their directors and managers needed enhanced support to maintain their expected level of service to their health care client. Two performance consultants were engaged who facilitated DiversiCorp leadership through a systematic organizational development process that culminated in the creation of an organizational “competency operating system.” This competency/behavioral-based system took as key inputs existing relevant company competencies and was developed with stakeholder involvement using a critical incident approach. Additionally, it was the core mechanism that then drove performance improvement through improved hiring practices, behavioral interview training, job tools and performance support, enhanced job descriptions, and aligned performance expectations and appraisals.*

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## **ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND**

DiversiCorp Communications is a provider of health care IT services, including communication networks (e.g. secured hard-wired and wifi internet), application support and implementation (e.g. electronic medical health care records), phone networks, IT consulting, as well as a staffed IT “Help Desk.” It is part of a conglomeration of business entities that contribute to a \$100B (US) global organization.

For the past several years DiversiCorp has provided these services to Red Oaks Health System, which is a network of approximately 10 regional hospitals, 40 medical centers, and 30 pharmacies. Red Oaks Health System (ROHS) is a not-for-profit corporation with approximately 20,000 employees. With annual revenues of over \$4B US, ROHS has approximately 3 million out-patient visits and 100,000 patient admissions annually. ROHS has an estimated regional economic impact of over \$6B US.

ROHS relies greatly upon the IT support services offered by DiversiCorp, not only for their basic IT infrastructure, but also for immediate IT support that underpins patient care and outcomes. The business relationship is often high-pressure, time-sensitive, and complex. Additionally, the outcomes of the relationship impact the likelihood of the renewal of multi-year service contracts between ROHS and DiversiCorp.

## **SETTING THE STAGE**

DiversiCorp has adopted the ITIL approach to service management. ITIL (Information Technology Infrastructure Library) is a widely-used set of best practices in the IT service field and is based upon the service lifecycle of service strategy, service design, service transition, and service operation (Arraj, 2013). As DiversiCorp focused on continuously improving its services for ROHS, it looked to ITIL as a key component of this effort.

Over the course of the business relationship, the number of DiversiCorp employees who serviced the ROHS account has grown quite rapidly. Three years ago there were approximately 80 employees on the DiversiCorp-ROHS team; today there are over 260. This growth has provided opportunities for professional advancement for individuals at all levels. DiversiCorp has promoted several individual contributors to the manager ranks, and some managers to the director level. The 20 managers and 8 directors on the DiversiCorp-ROHS team have varying levels of skill and experience in managing and directing. As might be expected in a fast-growing organization, several individuals were promoted based upon performance and potential without much support in developing the competencies required for success at the next level.

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Both DiversiCorp and ROHS had existing models for the purposes of leadership development. DiversiCorp has its own internal leadership initiative based around “leadership dimensions” and ROHS had an existing “leadership competency model.” Both of these models were sound organizational development (OD) tools that aligned to each company’s vision, mission, and values, but were not utilized because of lack of resources (i.e, time) and did not offer a specific set of competency-based behaviors that were vital to the success of DiversiCorp-ROHS managers and directors. Thus, developing management and leadership competencies for these 28 managers and directors represented the next phase of service improvement for DiversiCorp and their on-going partnership with ROHS.

The core team that was involved with the project included an independent performance consultant who specialized in organizational development and training, Robert Opecki, in addition to the following key DiversiCorp employees, all of whom were exclusively focused on their ROHS client:

- Thomas Burnet, Executive Director; responsible for the overall DiversiCorp-ROHS function and the business relationship with ROHS.
- Gretchen Piperia, Director of IT Group; responsible for quality assurance and ITIL processes.
- Margaret Templeton, Senior Business Analyst; responsible for talent management, recruiting, and hiring.
- Janet Tourbaden, Program Manager; responsible for service improvement initiatives and an internal trainer.

## **CASE DESCRIPTION**

### **Project Engagement**

Margaret Templeton was the DiversiCorp employee who reached out and engaged Robert as a performance consultant for DiversiCorp. The first two meetings were conducted via conference calls, and served the multiple purposes of a “meet and greet,” providing Robert with an initial overview of the situation, as well as an initial collection of needs assessment data. Thomas Burnet, Janet Troubaden, Margaret, and Robert participated on these initial calls.

Margaret and Janet both described an emergent issue around the performance of managers, and some directors, and said that they felt there was a need for training to bridge those performance issues. Though the perceived needs by stakeholders should be taken cautiously, many needs assessment experts maintain that this early data collection can still offer meaningful data (Guerra-Lopez, 2007).

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The DiversiCorp team's perceived needs for IT managers included:

- How to conduct sound, legally-defensible interviews (training);
- How to impact employee engagement (employee development);
- How to deal with personnel issues (training);
- Soft skills, such as written and verbal communication (training);
- Translating technical to "business speak" (communication);
- Business skills: Less function specific, more systems awareness (training);
- Performance improvement planning (performance management/improvement);
- How to deliver performance reviews (coaching and mentoring).

Thomas spoke of DiversiCorp's rapid growth in response to ROHS's needs in the IT area. DiversiCorp had seen nearly 225% growth in the number of employees to satisfy this need over a three-year period. The number of managers and directors had a similarly rapid growth rate. This tremendous growth also came with growing pains. One of the challenges was that external hiring of managers and directors was difficult, as the pool of qualified external candidates was very small. Also, philosophically, DiversiCorp liked to promote from within. These two facts led to the result of promoting good performers. Of these 28 leaders, 8 were at the executive level (directors), and 20 were managers, most being at their job for only weeks to a few months.

Margaret said that she felt many of the employees who had been promoted had a "difficult transition from employee to manager." Due to the nature of their business these people were generally very good "technical people," and since that is what they knew, and were both good at and rewarded for, that is where they often focused their energy as managers. But now they needed to be "business people," which includes learning HR skills such as recruitment, interviewing skills, and selection. Many managers were aware of their shortcomings, and had asked Margaret for help in hiring. Jim added that "leaders are empowered to act, but may not know what it looks like." Margaret felt that the transition of employee to leader with a focus on the maturity of a manager over time was vital.

Janet, who was the internal trainer at DiversiCorp, added that although these managers were well-trained technical experts, they needed this technical expertise to be augmented with a management education and training program.

The DiversiCorp team had spent time thinking about such a program, and its initial vision included:

- A focus on managers,
- A potential quarterly or annual "Leadership Conference,"

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- A curriculum developed around the perceived needs with an initial focus on soft skills,
- Skilled trainers to deliver the training,
- A potential tie-in to “ITIL Certification,”
- A Communication Plan.

Janet pointed out that they have had a robust training program in place for several years around the ITIL framework. Her hope was to have ITIL play a role in whatever end program or solution the core team came up with. In this way, ITIL would in a meaningful way provide a structural and process “backbone” of the organization. The initial years of ITIL training focused on “education and awareness” of ITIL for DiversiCorp employees, but DiversiCorp was now at a stage of “alignment and maturity” and ready for ITIL to be integrated into more daily work and new initiatives such as the one we were now focusing on.

### **An Integrated OD Approach**

The types of performance issues addressed here are common in situations like the one DiversiCorp found itself in. Top employees were promoted to another level due to their performance in their current one. In essence, performers were placed in situations without the necessary support needed to perform (Gilbert, 1978; Rummler, 2006). It was highly likely (and would be confirmed later with the additional data collected) that DiversiCorp needed to develop management and leadership capabilities of its existing and future management team. This was true for the DiversiCorp team’s desire for interview training, but the ideal approach would integrate not only training and development, but also should help to improve future hiring efforts, performance management, and promotion decisions.

The first step was to identify the behaviors and related competencies that were important to the organization. DiversiCorp was a mature company with a framework of Leadership Dimensions already in existence. Similarly, ROHS had its own Leadership Standards of Excellence, which DiversiCorp wanted to internalize into its own organizational practices to best serve ROHS and to minimize a sense of separateness from ROHS. So, as a starting point, the approach was to integrate a variety of strategic inputs, including not only DiversiCorp’s Leadership Dimensions and the ROHS Leadership Standards of Excellence, but also the ITIL Management and Leadership Competencies.

These inputs had clear implications for managing and leading at DiversiCorp; however, they each had limitations that prevented them from providing direct guidance for management and leadership development. For example, the DiversiCorp Leadership Dimensions were fairly vague and did not provide clear guidance on

desired behaviors *within the DiversiCorp-ROHS group*. Similarly, ITIL outlines competencies specific to ITIL, but does not provide clear interpretations *within the DiversiCorp-ROHS group*. Thus, the ideal solution would enable not only enhanced management and leadership performance, but also would provide the basis for improvements in hiring, promotion, and performance evaluation at DiversiCorp-ROHS.

## **Competency-Based Performance System**

In order to achieve these ends Robert proposed a competency-based system for developing the DiversiCorp management team, and enhancing DiversiCorp's overall human resource performance. A competency-based approach is a flexible, powerful, best practice approach that in this case, ties together critical company and customer values, leadership dimensions, and ITIL requirements through specific behaviors (or *performance requirements*) required for success. A competency-based approach essentially provides an "operating system" which supports the development and integration of a variety of "applications," including training and development, hiring, promotion, and performance evaluation.

The approach to develop such a system follows a logical, proven method. The development process includes participation by individual contributors, managers, and directors at DiversiCorp. Participation in developing the system has two goals: first to identify the "right" competencies and performance requirements, and second, to begin building buy-in and support for the changes and improvements that inevitably follow. Additionally, for this project this approach was customized to fit into the ITIL process phases of *strategy, design, transition, and operation*.

The *Strategy* phase was already in motion at DiversiCorp as the core team first met. The first strategic decisions were to focus on ITIL implementation. The decision to develop an integrative management/ leadership development effort based upon ITIL, and key ROHS and DiversiCorp leadership dimensions, represented the next evolution of this strategy.

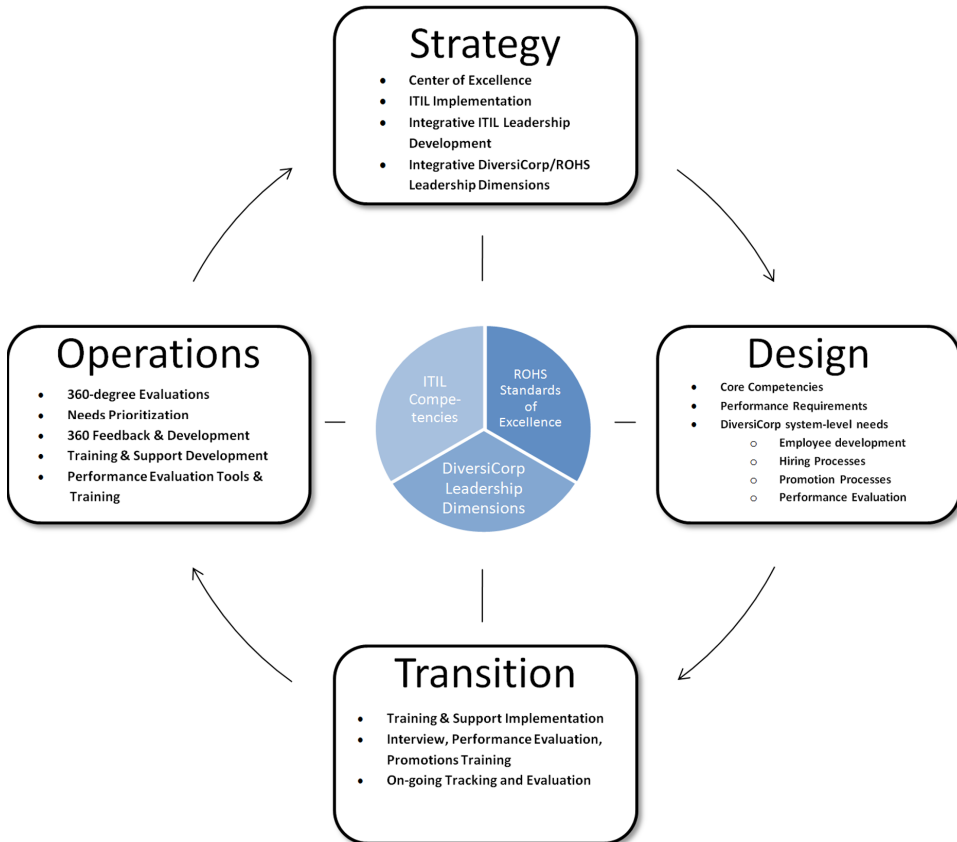
The *Design* phase focused on developing the core system comprised of the competencies and performance requirements expected of managers and leaders, as well as identifying DiversiCorp system-level support needs (such as development needs, improving hiring, promotions, and evaluations). This was the most critical and time-intensive phase.

At the juncture of the *Design* and *Transition* phases, the specific competencies and performance requirements become the foundation for developing various applications. For example, a key group-level need was interviewing candidates which was addressed through a group-based instructional intervention. In the case



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Figure 1. ITIL leadership competencies lifecycle process



of unique individual needs, these can be addressed within individual development plans through a variety of individually-driven development methods, such as coaching, external training, and developmental assignments. Thus, toward the close of the *Transition* phase, the various applications (such as training and performance evaluations) were developed with leader, manager, and individual contributor input, and prepared for roll-out.

During the *Operations* phase, the various applications were rolled out. Training and other group-level development efforts were then scheduled and rolled-out. Similarly, other applications, such as behavioral interviewing, and recommendations for promotion systems and performance evaluations were rolled-out with supporting tools.

Robert intentionally embraced the existing framework used by the client (ITIL) and synthesized the solution within that familiar framework (see Table 1), which

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*Table 1. ITIL phases, process steps, and team involvement*

	<b>Step</b>	<b>Involvement</b>	<b>Timing</b>
<i>Strategy</i>	1. Start of work meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set goals for effort, including calendar timeline</li> </ul>	Thomas, Gretchen, Margaret, Janet, Robert	Week 1
<i>Design</i>	2. Review existing inputs & develop initial interview tools	Robert	Week 1
	3. Conduct initial interviews <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial prioritization of competencies</li> </ul>	Focus group(s) of managers and directors, Robert	Week 3
	4. Develop focus group, interview, and survey tools	Robert	Week 4
	5. Review existing hiring, promotion, performance evaluation processes and tools	Robert	Week 4
	6. Conduct focus groups, interviews, surveys <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify specific leader and manager performance requirements for the prioritized competencies</li> </ul>	Robert, directors, managers, individual contributors	Week 6
<i>Transition</i>	7. Conduct 360	Robert, directors, managers, individual contributors	Week 8
	8. Prioritize individual and group development needs and support mechanisms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify &amp; prioritize group-level development needs</li> <li>• Agree to training and non-instructional development methods</li> </ul>	Robert, Thomas, Gretchen, Margaret, Janet	Week 9
	9. Conduct 360 feedback & development planning sessions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small groups of directors, managers to understand individual results and to create development plans</li> </ul>	Robert, directors, managers	Week 9
	10. Develop training and non-instructional interventions	Robert	Week 10
	11. Develop behavioral interview and performance evaluation tools & training	Robert	Week 12
<i>Operations</i>	12. Roll out training and non-instructional interventions	Robert, Thomas, Gretchen, Margaret, Janet	Week 6, 12
	13. Roll out behavioral interview, performance evaluation, and promotion processes and tools (training)	Robert, Thomas, Gretchen, Margaret, Janet	Week 13
	14. Support roll out with tracking and evaluation mechanisms	Robert, Thomas, Gretchen, Margaret, Janet	Week 14 onward

helped to build buy-in to the competency-based performance system process, and also to reinforce the commitment of Robert to his client's history, previous efforts, and decision-making. This can help to garner credibility, trust, and long-term commitment to the consultative relationship (Solomonson, 2012).

## **Competency Analysis**

Robert facilitated DiversiCorp individual contributors, managers, and directors through a structured process to identify and prioritize manager and leader development needs at the competency level (e.g., Leadership Dimensions, ITIL competencies, Leadership Standards of Excellence). Again, it should be emphasized that Robert’s job was specifically *not* to formally assess the validity of the competency sets that were in existence at the time of project. Rather, it was to integrate them with practical tools to help with the immediate organizational needs of hiring, employee engagement, and performance management. However, the process of data collection and analysis, and specifically the attempt to align critical incidents to existing competencies, helped to informally suggest the appropriateness and comprehensiveness of the previous work identifying competencies.

Data were collected from multiple sources and levels within the DiversiCorp-ROHS organization. Additionally, Robert collected both quantitative and qualitative data to ensure reliability, validity, and richness. Table 2 describes the data sources for the analysis.

During each individual interview, the 8 directors ranked the importance of 10 ROHS competencies, and then ranked the strength of both directors and managers in these competencies. Similarly, the directors ranked the importance of 11 DiversiCorp competencies towards IT success, and then ranked the strength of directors, managers, and individual contributors in these competencies. Directors then described examples of directors and managers demonstrating their top three ranked ROHS competencies. In this way, Robert was able to: 1) rank director perceptions of relative competency importance; 2) determine the perceived strength and weaknesses of each competency by job level; 3) prioritize which competencies should be focused on to maximize value to the organization; and 4) build examples of “effective” behavioral examples of key leadership competencies within the DiversiCorp-ROHS

*Table 2. Data sources, participation level, sample size, and type*

<b>Data Source</b>	<b>Participation Level</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>	<b>Method/Type</b>
Directors	100%	N=8	Interview/Qualitative
Directors	100%	N=8	Focus Group/Qualitative
Managers	100%	N=20	Focus Groups/Qualitative
Individual Contributors	17% (randomly selected)	n=40 (N=260)	Focus Groups/Qualitative
Directors	100%	N=8	Survey/Quantitative
Managers	100%	N=20	Survey/Quantitative

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group (the *performance requirements*). The next step was to conduct focus groups that reflected all three levels of employees at DiversiCorp – directors, managers, individual contributors. Robert used the results of the director interviews to create focus group tools that included a prioritized list of competencies from DiversiCorp’s leadership team. The director-level focus group was designed to capture directors’ perspective regarding the challenges that both directors and managers faced on the job. Table 3 lists some of the results of their work. This list would be used to help determine potential needs for any instructional and non-instructional components to the project in the future.

Managers were organized into three focus groups, and further grouped into pairs or triads to brainstorm effective and ineffective examples of both director and manager behaviors in regards to specific ITIL competencies. For example, one pair of managers were tasked with listing specific examples of how a director would be

*Table 3. Director feedback on biggest challenges*

Level	Challenges
Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Honest open discussions.</li> <li>● Collaboration; making managers accountable to collaborate and solve problems.</li> <li>● Need to break down silos.</li> <li>● Directors are not strategic—all strategy is ROHS-driven.</li> <li>● Medical process is different than IT process. Justification between these two processes. Conflict between these two. Director has to justify these things.</li> <li>● Leadership: having the courage to take steps forward and inspiring team to take those steps.</li> <li>● Accountability/getting over victim mentality and going on offensive.</li> <li>● Moral leader/integrity. Doing what’s best for organization and people.</li> <li>● Truly understanding how and why the technology we provide/support is used all the way through work processes.</li> <li>● Letting go of control over technical stuff and day to day details.</li> <li>● Keeping people engaged, excited, and feeling appreciated when they haven’t gotten a raise in several years.</li> <li>● Organizational - stuck between ROHS and DiversiCorp. Real loyalty is to ROHS.</li> <li>● Pace makes planning difficult.</li> </ul>
Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● DiversiCorp doesn’t offer management training.</li> <li>● Different manager styles.</li> <li>● Technical mind-set of technical people.</li> <li>● Many have little management experience and if from outside we need to ensure that we hire with experience.</li> <li>● Used to have some management training from DiversiCorp, but now is not offered.</li> <li>● Managers need to form relationships with other managers.</li> <li>● Burning people out - working on weekends</li> <li>● Collaboration.</li> <li>● have moved technical people into manager roles.</li> <li>● We have some overlap in technology, so can be a power struggle.</li> <li>● ROHS decision making--ROHS can be slow to make decisions.</li> <li>● Don’t always know what our budget is.</li> <li>● Lots of issues with network space--dire need of structure, process, discipline.</li> </ul>

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effective and not effective at “Listening and Collaborating.” Similarly, they were tasked with listing specific examples of how a manager would be effective and not effective at “Encouraging Participation.” Table 4 shows the results of these data. In this way, managers as a group provided feedback on all ITIL competencies for both director and manager behaviors.

Individual contributors were selected randomly from the DiversiCorp employee database by Margaret for their participation in one of six difference focus groups. At these focus group meetings, the individual contributors were grouped into pairs or triads to list effective and ineffective examples of both manager and individual contributor behaviors in regards to specific DiversiCorp competencies. As an ex-

*Table 4. Manager focus group data on behavioral examples*

<b>Level</b>	<b>Data</b>	
<b>Director</b>	<b>Competency – “Listen and Collaborate Effectively”</b>	
	<b>Example of “Effective Behaviors”</b>	<b>Example of “Ineffective Behaviors”</b>
	Conducts regular meetings with teams and peers to keep abreast of issues or concerns on an organizational level.	Having a closed door policy where there is only one way communication.
	Being a mentor and coaching the chosen protégés.	Micromanaging the entire chain of authority thereby bypassing the right channel (implies lack of trust).
	Being readily available to subordinates to discuss any issues, concerns or new ideas.	Not showing up for important strategic planning meetings.
	Keeping the team focused and well informed of strategic directions of the organization.	Not building relationships with customers, partners, vendors, and employees.
	Delegating authority to managers to chose the correct path to lead their specific group.	Making unilateral decisions without listening to input from team, colleagues, other teams.
<b>Manager</b>	<b>Competency – “Encouraging Participation”</b>	
	<b>Example of “Effective” Behaviors</b>	<b>Example of “Ineffective” Behaviors</b>
	Encouraging brainstorming sessions for new initiatives or problem solving- No bad ideas.	Not letting employees talk during meetings (monologue from manager).
	Enticing participation from reluctant employees by coaching them to actively participate.	Not conducting periodic staff dialogues.
	Creating actionable items based on teams input and brainstorming (effective decision making).	Discouraging ideas in a mixed forum meaning other teams, vendors, etc.
	Conducting timely one-on-one meetings with employees to discuss any issues, ideas.	Leverage and rotate resources for different functional areas within the group.
	Creating an environment where employees have ownership of key initiatives or projects. E.g. assigning a specific goal to the employee.	Not truly listening to ideas from the team (cutting them off in meeting or playing on phone, etc).

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ample, one pair of individual contributors were asked to brainstorm both effective and ineffective examples of behaviors around the competencies of “Committed,” “Meticulous,” and “Innovative.” In other cases, a pair of individual contributors created a list of single exemplars of each competency (see Table 5). These 10 competencies were developed by DiversiCorp prior to the project and provided to Robert, who confirmed their validity (though not necessarily their comprehensiveness) by drawing many examples of each from varied employees and focus groups.

In summary, through this data collection Robert identified key competencies at all three employee levels with full stakeholder involvement, indeed even stakeholder responsibility, because the stakeholders were the people who created the ranked lists and performance requirements. Importantly, these performance requirements demonstrated the competencies *specific to the needs of ITIL, ROHS, and DiversiCorp*, not simply generic ones. As a final part of needs assessment within the Design phase, Robert also reviewed existing hiring, promotion, and performance evaluation systems in order to identify where and how the competency-based system could help to improve them. Thus, the competency-based “operating system” provided a foundation for aligning multiple HR applications via the core set of competencies.

*Table 5. Individual contributor focus group data on behavioral examples*

<b>Competency</b>	<b>Example of “Effective” Behavior</b>	<b>Example of “Ineffective” Behavior</b>
Positive	In a meeting Manager calls out individuals that did good work.	In a meeting Manager calls out individuals that were performing poorly.
Accountable	Engineer taking ownership of a requested Change Control.	Failing to meet customers’ expectations.
Communicator	Engineer mentoring individuals that want to learn a new technology.	Failing to communicate with customer or leadership.
Responsive	Engineer responding in a timely manner to IT requests.	On call engineer not answering pages or phone after hours.
Proud	Engineer taking ownership of a new cabling standard.	Not attending team building exercise.
Respectful	Engineer securing laptop while in the presence of patient.	Engineer leaving laptop unlocked in view of guests and patients.
Committed	Engineers assisted other team members proactively.	Engineer working on an island or in a bubble without outside assistance.
Meticulous	Reporting a spill to proper personnel to prevent injury.	Ignoring hazard and caution signs.
Innovative	Manager supplying new tools to engineers to help promote innovation.	Manager not considering or allowing new ideas to be heard or tested.
Diversity	Team members sharing ideas.	Team member not participating in discussions.

## **CURRENT CHALLENGES FACING THE ORGANIZATION**

Robert collected, organized, and analyzed the data over the course of several weeks and then sat down with Thomas, Margaret, and Janet to review the findings. Many of the DiversiCorp team's initial perceived needs for IT managers were supported, especially those that had to do with improving the skills and knowledge of DiversiCorp employees who were promoted from within (e.g. such as hiring/interviewing skills). The breadth of data collected also pointed to other needs within the organization that address performance gaps at the individual, process, and organizational levels (Rummler, 2006). It should be noted that the purpose of this project was to focus on issues to improve performance, and despite the following summary of challenges there were a great deal of positive trends and successes that are not mentioned.

### **Individual Level**

Directors were challenged to keep managers and individual contributors engaged, excited, and feeling appreciated. This was a demanding task, especially in a fast-paced environment that emphasizes business decisions over interpersonal ones. Though managers wanted to have honest and open discussions with directors, there was often a failure to communicate strategy and direction change. There were directors who had a "closed door policy" which reinforced one-way communication and unilateral decisions that excluded input from the team, colleagues, and other teams. Managers felt a need for a sharing of positive accomplishments with departments and teams coming from directors. Directors (and managers) needed to let go of control of technical work and day-to-day details, thus empowering individual contributors to do their jobs. There was a sense from managers of directors micromanaging the entire process chain thereby bypassing the right channels. Some directors had a lack of leadership experience as well as a lack of understanding of how and why the technology was used for ROHS all the way through work processes. Lastly, many managers felt that director decisions were often based on emotions rather than the skills of rational decision-making.

Managers are also faced with challenges. There was a feeling of insufficient sharing of information, wherein periodic staff dialogues allowed employees to be "in the know." But even when these dialogues did occur there was a tendency of managers to "monologue," and discourage ideas in a mixed forum meeting (with other departments or vendors), or not truly listening to ideas from the team (by cutting off the comments or being inattentive, such as being focused on a cell phone). This lack of openness was paralleled in some managers by being disengaged or disinterested in important business events. There seemed also to be an absence of responsibility taking, both in an unwillingness to accept responsibility for corrective actions from

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directors and also by buying time or delaying actions until issues resolved themselves or were escalated to directors. These issues contributed to the feeling that managers were unaware of the impact of their actions, and also unaware of how they were perceived by colleagues and individual contributors because of them.

Individual contributors have the task of making the hardware, software, and materials work. But, similar to both directors and managers, communication is a challenge. Often there was a lack of communication with the ROHS client or with DiversiCorp leadership. Email, which is the primary form of communication, was sometimes procrastinated and not responded to for several days. Similarly, voice mails went unresponded to for many days when the message came from another team. In meetings certain team members did not participate in the discussions, even though they were encouraged to do so. Accountability was an issue; teams had looked for a scapegoat instead of a solution during a root cause analysis of a technical problem. There was a feeling among some individual contributors that others were knowledge hoarders, and did not offer cross-training for self-preservation purposes. Finally, there were issues with attitudinal or motivational aspects, such as looking for the negative in a system instead of suggesting improvements, being non-enthusiastic, and having a “good enough” mentality.

### **Process Level**

Directors were responsible for setting the standards for the organization, but often there existed unclear expectations and consequences, both in setting them and in communicating them to managers and individual contributors. This lack of clarity, especially in terms of communicating client wants, worked to disengage the “IT do’ers.” It also pushed the teams to have a lack of collaboration in which managers were not accountable to collaborate and solve problems. Instead of engaging in a pro-active continuous improvement process, improvement was often motivated by crisis. Even though DiversiCorp uses the ITIL framework as its service management process, the medical process is different than IT process. There was conflict between these processes and directors needed to do better at justifying the conflict between these two. Lastly, due to the pace and demands of the environment, directors tended to focus more on the beginning of initiatives than the rest of the process. This left a vacuum in a focus on follow through, initiative completion, and participation.

Managers often fell into the trap of letting their technical expertise trump their managerial responsibilities. This meant that they would often “roll up their sleeves” and jump in to a technical problem instead of letting individual contributors solve the problem. This undermined the teams feeling a sense of trust from managers as well as caused managers to lose focus on their managerial tasks. Also, there was a



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feeling that meetings were not standardized and were either effective or ineffective based on which manager was running it. In the cases of “bad meetings,” managers had publicly called out individuals who were performing poorly, and had not considered or allowed new ideas to be heard.

Individual contributors had many process issues around change control. The first was team members who make undocumented changes; quietly fixing a problem, but not notifying team members of the problem. Another was not following the change testing protocol – applying changes to an IT system without first testing them in a controlled test environment. Also there were issues with following communication milestones; for example, when a change control was scheduled for a specific time window but required additional time due to complications. The team working on the change failed to contact the helpdesk to extend the change window, and as a result support tickets were generated, making more and unnecessary work for the team and other teams. There were also process issues around security. Individual contributors had used non-encrypted usb drives, putting patient data at risk (and exposing the organization to HIPAA violations). Similarly, individual contributors had left patient documents on the printer and left laptops unlocked in view of guests and patients.

### **Organizational Level**

Directors were placed as heads of individual departments. Even though there was great deal of necessary cross-team functioning there existed silo-ing within DiversiCorp that diminished a sense of team and minimized effective communication. It was the directors’ task to reduce this silo effect. There was also a strong feeling at all levels of the organization that it was a culture of “maintaining the status quo.” Innovation is a core component of what DiversiCorp does - indeed it is a competency for team members - yet this culture was antithetical to innovation. Directors often felt the pressure of “being stuck in a middle position between DiversiCorp and their ROHS client.” But as one director pointed out, “our real loyalty is to ROHS.” There was a need at the most senior level of DiversiCorp to clarify this tension for directors, so that it could then be disseminated throughout the organization. Many directors felt that they were not strategic; rather all strategy came from ROHS and directors were simply heads of tactical units to implement that strategy. Finally, with the fast growth and requirements for new personnel most of the focus of HR had been on hiring. This had left existing employees, some of whom have not seen a pay raise in years, feel unappreciated and potentially leading to low motivation and turn-over.

Managers had the vital role of leading teams. There was a perception that managers needed to improve their leadership of having the courage to take steps forward and inspiring their teams to take those steps. Accountability was a recurring issue

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at DiversiCorp, and managers had been fearful for speaking up regarding accuracy to avoid accountability. Lastly, some individual contributors felt that there was reluctance on the part of managers to allow for healthy work-life balance, for example being able to use vacation time when needed.

Individual contributors were also affected by the “maintaining the status quo” culture. Many felt that things were done because “that’s the way we’ve always done it.” One employee noted that “we can’t do that here statements are rooted in past failures, but overshadow the spirit of innovation.” Additionally, the workforce at DiversiCorp, especially at the individual contributor level, was diverse. Yet there seemed to be instances where intolerance occurred. For example, opinions were discounted of those who were not of the same religious belief system, jokes were made that were ethnically insensitive in public areas, and managers did not learn how to correctly pronounce an employee’s name. Though this intolerance manifests at the individual contributor level, a focus on diversity needs to be an organizational imperative.

## **SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Robert focused on solutions that created meaningful and measurable outcomes for DiversiCorp-ROHS. Ultimately, these outcomes were about supporting the ROHS vision of transforming lives and communities. To accomplish this, the team wanted to:

- Ensure they aligned leadership development efforts with the ROHS service culture competencies.
- Integrate ITIL, ROHS, and DiversiCorp competencies.
- Provide training, tools, support to directors, managers, and individual contributors to continually improve service.

Robert recommended a phased approach in which solutions could be rolled out over time while focusing on the most urgent needs immediately. This two-phase approach allowed core work to be done initially - defining the DiversiCorp “competency operating system” - and then designing and developing the interventions necessary to bridge DiversiCorp’s performance gaps. The design of this phased roll-out was as follows:

### **Phase I**

For Phase I of the solution Robert recommended:

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- Development of the DiversiCorp “competency operating system.”
- Behavioral interview training.
- Supporting tools.

The DiversiCorp “competency operating system” addressed all three levels of employee’s: directors, managers, and individual contributors. In essence, it specifically identified clear behavioral examples of performance for each level by using a critical incident approach to determine “effective” and “ineffective” behaviors. Once this “competency operating system” was developed it could offer the benefits of clear descriptions of performance expectations to existing employees, improved hiring, strengthening the pool of potential managers and directors, and reducing turnover.

Because DiversiCorp was still experiencing fast growth and the need to hire new employees coupled with the fact that existing hiring managers did not have the skills and knowledge to conduct high quality legally-valid interviews, Robert next provided behavioral interview training.

These facilitated training sessions were for both managers and directors and contained content around hiring and the law, the DiversiCorp-ROHS IT Behavioral Competencies, how to developing behavioral questions, and also role-play practice interviewing using these new techniques. Table 6 displays an example of a behavioral/competency-based rating scale for managers. For this phase of the project the team created:

*Table 6. Example of behavioral/competency-based rating scale for manager*

<b>Rating</b>	<b>Behavioral Example</b>	<b>Behavioral Example</b>
5-- High Performance	Models the desired behaviors and develop the relationships to be regarded as a trusted leader	Makes immediate tactical decisions to deliver IT services knowing that the strategic plan could be re-aligned at a later date.
4		
3-- Expected	Resolves functional challenges and address opportunities by using appropriate functional tool and utilizing methods such as the Plan Do Check Act Model to examine evidence.	Validates and advocate the needs of end user. E.g., Creates value through the use of available technology.
2		
1--Low	Relies on inconsistent criteria to select candidates instead of objective evidence of qualifications (e.g. emotions, nepotism) they reward inconsistent delivery of service and incompetence while expecting the A player to stay engaged and appreciated.	Places blame for inadequate service delivery on others (colleagues, end users, customers)

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- Behavioral/competency-based rating scales – Directors.
- Behavioral/ competency-based rating scales – Managers.
- Behavioral interview guide.
- Interview Job Aid – legal & illegal questions.
- Director training materials.
- Manager training materials.

### **Phase II**

For Phase II of the solution Robert recommended:

- Integration of “competency operating system” with unique employee development needs.
- Alignment of “competency operating system” to performance evaluation, promotion, job descriptions, and training support.

Once the “competency operating system” had been developed and both directors and managers had been familiarized with it, all DiversiCorp staff could use it as a framework for understanding expectations, measuring performance, and identifying areas for improvement. Individual performance plans were developed and directors and managers could rely on on-going mentoring and support from Robert initially, and internal DiversiCorp employees on an on-going basis.

Directors and managers were facilitated through a 360 feedback tool built around the “competency operating system.” For these two levels of staff this provided a key input towards the development of individualized development plans. Also, during this phase additional classroom training sessions were developed around topics such as business skills, communication skills, and other topics.

Key deliverables for Phase II included:

- 360 feedback tool.
- Individual development plans for leaders and managers.
- Prioritized group development needs (e.g. soft skills, communication, business skills, etc.).
- Promotion process and tools for leaders and managers.
- Enhanced performance evaluation tools.
- Leader and manager training based upon DiversiCorp priorities.

For example, the 5-point rating scales were used not only by interviewers to rank interviewees’ answers to specific questions during a job interview, but they were

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also used for current employees' performance evaluations. Gaps between the desired levels of performances behaviors (e.g. a "Low" ranking in the Maturity scale) would be bridged through a custom coaching, mentoring, or training program.

The outcomes of these efforts included not only customized performance plans, but also updated job descriptions with key responsibilities and competencies. Director and manager skills sets were also enhanced. These leaders were able to hire better performers who had specific performance expectations which helped to drive accountability. Importantly, DiversiCorp also sent a message to ROHS about their commitment to on-going improved service performance.

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## KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**Behavioral Interview:** A structured hiring interview within which candidates are asked specific questions that elicit specific examples of previous performance in situations similar to those that they would encounter on the job, and based upon specific competencies known to be required for job performance.

**Competencies:** Knowledge, Skills, Abilities, and Other Characteristics translated into specific job- and organization-related behaviors.

**Competency-Based System:** A collection of competencies aligned with an organization's strategic direction (vis a vis, vision, mission, core values, etc.) that collectively align human resource applications such as recruiting, staffing, employee development, performance management, etc. with that strategic direction.

**Critical Incident Technique:** A method for acquiring examples by asking responders to provide exemplar situations that describe a particular object of study/interest. In this case, employees were asked to provide examples of "effective" and "ineffective" behaviors of specific competencies.

**Maturity:** The qualities and behavior expected of a reasonable adult; experience, discretion, responsibility, reliability, wisdom and emotional intelligence.

**Needs Assessment:** A systematic process to determine gaps in results, a prioritization of those gaps, and determine solutions to bridge them.

**Performance:** Meaningful actions resulting in measurable results.

**Performance Consulting:** Engaging with clients (internal or external) for the purposes of improving individual, process, and/or organizational performance.

**Qualitative Data:** Collected data which describes non-measurable factors.

**Quantitative Data:** Collected data which defines measurable factors.