Sample Competency Descriptions

Use these examples to develop your own core competencies and proficiencies during a job analysis workshop. Common aspects are:

- Based on job tasks needed from day one on the job, create 4-5 required core competencies required for the position.
- Define at least two proficiency levels for "Meets" and "Exceeds". You can also choose to write four proficiency levels.
- A clear description of the possible proficiencies that applicants would demonstrate for the given competency.
- When complete, decide which proficiency level is required for competency at the grade being hired.

Analytical Ability

Approaches problems quantitatively and displays critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. Breaks down complex problems into component parts. Defines and tracks key metrics to make data-driven decisions.

- *Meets*: Breaks problems down into component parts. Displays repeated experience in qualitative and quantitative analysis. Defines product or project metrics beyond the basics and ties these metrics to decisions.
- *Exceeds*: Brings analytical thinking to everything they do, and has a range and depth of experience doing so. Anticipates the need for metrics and analysis early in the product and project discovery and design process, and carries metrics through iterations.

Stakeholder Engagement

Cultivates relationships with key internal and external stakeholders. Has superior negotiation skills that enable successful communication and cooperation across all levels of an organization, including executive leadership.

- *Meeets*: Provides examples and demonstrates the ability to identify a key stakeholder and a strategy for effective engagement.
- *Exceeds*: Provides examples and demonstrates the ability to manage multiple key stakeholders with varying levels of influence during a project or across multiple projects.

Superior EQ

Understands what motivates people, through keen observations of environment and context, and uses this knowledge to communicate and engage with partners and colleagues to identify obstacles and create appropriate mitigation strategies. Is a "fixer."

- *Meets*: Demonstrated ability and willingness to observe, understand, and adapt to disparate audiences and organizational dynamics. Provides examples of working through a communications breakdown and effectively problem-solving in the workplace.
- *Exceeds*: Demonstrates a superior ability to analyze situational dynamics in a politically-charged environment and to leverage this observational awareness to solve complex problems. Cites multiple different types of examples of effectively problem-solving in the workplace.

Team Building

Identifies necessary roles and motivates individuals to form, storm, norm, and perform as a cohesive team. Effectively provides feedback to team members, and deals with low performers. Fosters latent qualities within team members.

- *Meets*: Has both lead and built teams. Understands team members' strengths and weaknesses and balances skills effectively. Has experience dealing with low performers or other challenging management situations. Considers team development as a core responsibility if not a lower priority.
- *Exceeds*: Has both lead and built teams multiple times and in diverse organizations. Always considers effective organizational structures, and thinks beyond the scope of their team or teams. Views developing people as well as dealing with low performers and challenging management situations as a core responsibility, and can communicate team needs and wins both up and down their chain of command.

Customer Service and Support

Works with external and/or internal customers a large, geographically dispersed organization to assess their needs, provide information or assistance, resolve their problems, or satisfy their expectations; knows how to best utilize ticketing systems; is committed to providing quality products and services.

- *Meets*: Experience with a broad or diverse customer base in a large, geographically dispersed organization; independently resolves technical issues for internal and external customers; identifies, evaluates and manages customer service performance issues; performs needs analysis to identify areas of improvement and solutions issues.
- *Exceeds*: Applies a strategic approach to developing customer service requirements; uses quality assurance methods to maintain business analysis and assess customer experience. Engages or fosters relations with key stakeholders at various levels, and independently identifies and resolves potential issues. Identifies areas of process improvement and implements necessary changes without management engagement. Develops customer support policies and standards.

Technical Communication

Explains technical concepts to both technical and non-technical audiences. Able to frame technical choices to decision makers and justify organizational IT needs against business priorities. Develops networks and builds alliances; collaborates across boundaries to build strategic relationships and achieve common goals. Ability to understand others, empathize, and clearly articulate technical tradeoffs to non-technical individuals.

- *Meets*: Understands the needs of external and internal stakeholders and can develop a plan that serves both. Helps audiences of all types better understand issues and the impact of technical decisions on their business requirements. Brings clarity when justifying IT needs against broader business priorities. Is able to communicate effectively up and down the chain from senior leadership to hourly workers.
- *Exceeds*: Developed new ways of communicating technical information to various audiences. Has developed repeatable SOPs and process, templates, and systems for others to use in the organization to decide how this is operationalized. Provides examples and demonstrates the ability to manage multiple key stakeholders, including internal, external, and executive leadership, for influence across all levels of an organization.

Data Analysis

Plans, develops, and administers systems and applications for acquiring, storing, and retrieving data. Improves data quality, identifies patterns, and visualizes results to drive data-driven insights and decision making across the organization. Analyzes, defines, and executes data requirements, specifications, and policies, informed by ethics and best practices. Anticipates changes to data requirements. Evaluates and governs the use of new data technologies and architectures.

- *Meets*: Can collect, process, and perform statistical analysis of data without supervision. Able to translate numbers and data into plain English to support business decisions. Informs other data-driven decisions. Can both leverage existing and create new data sources as appropriate.
- *Exceeds*: Can collect, process, and perform statistical analysis of large amounts of data without supervision. Able to translate numbers and data into plain English to support major business decisions. Guides others in making data-driven decisions. Can both leverage existing and create new data sources as appropriate.

Systems and Networking

This is knowledge about computer systems, such as: Typical hardware components, OS internals, systems administration, configuration, and the use of common tools to explore and configure the workings of a production system. Includes networking and an understanding of how systems communicate over IP, TCP, HTTP, and the function of firewalls and load balancers. Includes cloud concepts like containers, Docker, VPC, etc.

- *Meets*: Understands how to use tools like ldd, fdisk, mdadm, LVM, etc. Can make use of VMs. Has detailed understanding of system processes, including fork/exec, signal handling. Understands how virtual memory works and paging. Can describe what's in /proc.
- *Exceeds*: Can effectively manage fleets of VMs. Understands how to perform tasks at scale (such as massive machine/VM upgrades). Can name some sysctl settings and when to change them. Can discuss containers and resource limits. Threads versus processes versus coroutines.

Troubleshooting

This is the ability to effectively troubleshoot problems. It requires scientific thinking and a methodical approach to identifying problems by developing hypotheses, testing those hypotheses, and narrowing down the root cause of an issue. This includes an understanding of monitoring and logging systems, and troubleshooting commands like tcpdump, strace, netstat, etc.

- *Meets*: Can articulate when you'd care about averages and when you'd care about 95th percentiles in request latencies. Knows what 'Address already in use' means and how to troubleshoot it. Can identify monitoring needs and design monitoring probes to capture that information. Can set up complex monitoring infrastructure. Understands scalability bottlenecks with thread and process pools. Can use tools like strace to understand application behavior.
- *Exceeds*: Can troubleshoot complex problems, such as storage system failures resulting in thread pool exhaustion manifesting as web page timeouts. Understands histograms. Can identify useful application metrics and knows how to instrument code so as to feed into a monitoring system. Can use tools like tcpdump or Wireshark to identify unidirectional packet loss/retransmit errors.

Incident and Change Management

This is the ability to effectively manage incidents and risk. It involves understanding roles during an incident and how to lead large-scale incident resolution by spawning and coordinating investigation teams. It also requires the ability to effectively communicate with non-technical stakeholders, including the writing of good post-mortems. It also includes an understanding of risk and how change management systems can be effectively used to mitigate/balance risk against agile development.

- *Meets*: Acts as a bridge between technical teams resolving a problem and leadership needing an assessment of the problem and resolution activities. Can lead a troubleshooting team to resolve an outage. Can clearly gauge risk of remediation activities and act decisively. Can identify risky changes and can exercise good judgment deferring a high-risk change.
- *Exceeds*: Can write incident coordination and communication plans. Can weigh user impact and establish severity of a problem and adapt response accordingly. Can coordinate between multiple investigation teams working different parts of the same or related problems. Can effectively keep resolution activities focused on resolution and not distracted by tasks like communication. Can identify and empower individuals that are strong contributors to an incident and politely dismiss those that are not.

Product Delivery

Regardless of environmental challenges, ships products and drives teams to deliver on key milestones. Gets Minimum Viable Products out the door without waiting for the perfect technical implementation or inclusion of every feature.

- *Meets*: Has a demonstrated track record of shipping software products and scoping to a Minimum Viable Product. Products may be on a small scale to only a few thousand users, but must have been broadly available. Has experience scoping and making tradeoffs to hit deadlines, and also working closely with engineers and designers in an iterative environment.
- *Exceeds*: Has repeated experience shipping software products to hundreds of thousands of users. Has experience in all parts of a product lifecycle from initial launch to optimization to sun-setting. Effectively makes prioritization decisions and manages to deadlines, working closely with engineers and designers in an iterative environment.

Engineering Considerations

Works effectively with engineers as a true partner. Understands the technical stack of a product and how it can impact product design and project schedules. Considers the complexities involved in building technology at massive scale.

- *Meets*: Repeated track record of working as a true partner with engineers. Describes situations where they have engaged in technical decisions or shifted product or project plans due to technical issues. Understanding some of the complexities of building technology at massive scale.
- *Exceeds*: Functions as a true partner with engineers in all technical products and projects in which they are involved. Able to identify potential technical concerns with proposals before consulting engineers. Repeatedly engages in technical decisions and supports engineering needs.

Product Design

Designs and launches software products and features focused on user needs, scoped to Minimum Viable Products, and with clear criteria for success. Understands and effectively critiques poor software product design.

- *Meets*: Identifies user needs in coordination with designers and researchers, and quickly connects them to product requirements. Defines priorities and makes tradeoffs in the context of user needs, but may do so without full understanding of broader business goals.
- *Exceeds*: Repeated examples of connecting product design to user needs, data-driven decisions, broader business goals, and technical requirements.