

**Making the Cut**



7 most desirable competencies among employers of new college graduates

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In my more than15 years in campus recruiting and career services, and through my many interactions with staffing leaders across industries, I have identified 7 competencies (in addition to functional and technical competencies) most used by recruiters and hiring managers to decide who does and does not make the cut in interviews. Although some companies have more formal competencies in their primary talent assessment models and some have fewer, candidates who understand these 7 and who can effectively provide examples of success will rise to the top in their interviews for employment and promotion.

1. **LEADERSHIP & INFLUENCE:** The ability to gain followership and influence others (especially those superior to you) to buy into an idea, solution, or proposal. This is especially important, as leading an influencing is not a skill that can be easily developed. Generally candidates must be able to prove effectiveness and need limited coaching.

**Related interview question:** *Give an example of one of the best ideas you ever sold and when you were faced with opposition or resistance in getting buy-in.*

1. **INITIATIVE:**Defining those things you have done in your previous roles that no others (especially with the same job title or at same job level) can say they did. This is about recognizing an opportunity and taking it and also delivering results that exceeded expectations.

**Related interview question:** *Give an example of something you have initiated on your own and that was unique to you which created a positive impact on the organization.*

1. **COMMUNICATIONS:**This includes both verbal and nonverbal communications. More importantly, it is about having the skills and capabilities to adapt communications to your audience and to create positive impact through the way you deliver key messages. You would likely never deliver a message in the same way to both a CEO and an Analyst.

**Related interview question:** *Give an example of one of the toughest presentations you ever made and how you prepared for it. How were you able to gauge your effectiveness?*

1. **TEAMWORK:** Every team is different, but a strong team player will quickly identify the key strengths and weaknesses of each team member and find ways to help engage all members to ensure the team's productivity and success. Specifically, employers will want to confirm that every team you are on is a higher-performing team because of the role you play, value you add, and synergy you help create.

**Related interview question:** *Describe the role you played on recent project team and the challenges you faced with team dynamics and in achieving key objectives.*

1. **APPLIED INTELLIGENCE:** Identifying something you learned in a classroom, through training, or through self study that applied to a real-life situation. As a new employee or in a new role, you will have to learn new concepts, systems, technologies, etc., and your manager will seek evidence of your ability to quickly grasp new concepts and apply them in an effective way.

**Related interview question:***Give an example of something you learned through formal or informal training and used effectively in your job role or function.*

1. **ETHICS & INTEGRITY:**There is never a right way to do a wrong thing. Even so, everyone will encounter a dilemma at some point on the job when a decision must be made between meeting deadlines and achieving an outcome or following all procedures and processes and likely missing a goal. Thus, this is about the action(s) you took when faced with such a challenge and how you managed to adhere to compliance with guidelines, policy, or procedures.

**Related interview question:***Share an example of a time when you had to bend the rules in order to be successful. What did you do?*

1. **PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS:** Demonstrating your ability to successfully solve a complex business challenge and doing so in a way that shows creativity, innovation, and differentiation.

**Related interview question:***What is the toughest challenge you have had to solve in the past year? How did you go about it?*

The goal should be to identify 2-3 solid examples for each competency above. Be sure the examples are recent, relevant to the role being pursuing, and provide strong evidence of the ability to achieve extraordinary results (results that would not be common among others). Most importantly, before sharing examples with a recruiter or hiring manager, candidates should share them with a peer, friend, or career coach and seek confirmation they are effectively articulating each example and providing compelling evidence of success.

**About the Author**

*Jeff has nearly 20 years of experience that spans career services, recruiting technologies, and global talent acquisition, working with such companies as AbbVie, Whirlpool Corp, GE, and Handshake. Currently, Jeff serves at the Executive Director of the Career Services Network at Michigan State University. In his role, he oversees career services across the University’s 14 colleges that support nearly 50,000 students. Among the key areas of responsibility are career education, technology systems, employer relations, and first-destination success.*

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