

Kim's response to a LinkedIn post asking, "Are there competencies that are universally important for professional development across all professional/knowledge based positions? If so, what are the top 3 in your opinion?"

Opinions are OK, but maybe we don't have to rely on them too much since there's quite a lot of research on competencies. (Please note that my references will be to the trademarked Leadership Architect® Competency Library, intellectual property of Lominger – Korn/Ferry.) We know which competencies are correlated with performance, which are correlated with potential (a characteristic that is substantially different from performance), and promotion (which is more closely correlated to performance than potential in most organizations, but perhaps shouldn't be). We know which competencies are scarce, which are widely demonstrated in employee populations, and which are most difficult to develop. Your questions refer to professional development, and they're difficult to answer unless we're clear on the intent of "professional development."

For instance, if our intent is to identify price-of-admission competencies that are highly correlated with performance at multiple career levels, three good competencies might be: Drive for Results, Functional/Technical Skills, and Customer Focus. If someone at any level lacks skill in these competencies, they're going to be in trouble. On the other hand, they're probably not good choices for "professional development" because the vast majority of people don't have skill gaps in these competencies. Also, because there's pretty clearly a developmental focus in your questions, we need to make sure that the competencies we specify are granular enough to meaningfully enable development. Though we might find face validity in "competencies" such as EQ or Communication, we would have to be more specific to provide the basis for meaningful coaching and development.

Do "all professional/knowledge based positions" include individual contributors? If you're including individual contributors, managers, and enterprise leaders, I'm sorry to say, Greg, but I don't think there are good answers to your questions. Unless you identify price-of-admission competencies (not good choices for development because there's little developmental need for most people) or select "meta-competencies," I don't think you'll find a lot of common ground in developmental needs at various career stages. What's important for you as an individual contributor become less important when you start managing people – and so it goes throughout all career transitions. Meta-competencies are too broad to be good choices, but with that caveat, here are some suggestions (sorry, can't limit to three):

- Demonstrating Personal Flexibility
- Managing Diverse Relationships
- Getting Work Done Through Others
- Creating the New and Different
- Dealing with Trouble