
Competency Models In Action:

Industry-Education Partnership Results in New Retail Management Certificate Program

January 2014

- Using the Retail Competency Model to develop a new certificate program
- Partnering with retail industry partners to identify requisite employee competencies
- Providing education value to employers and workers

Introduction

Tyler Junior College (TJC) in conjunction with Brookshire Grocery Company and the Western Association of Food Chains has implemented a Retail Management Certificate program, the first grocery industry association endorsed credential in Texas. The program was recognized in the National Council for Workforce Education's 2013 Exemplary Award Program. It was also the basis for the college's 2012 \$12 million Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) grant award with three other postsecondary education institutions. The three other TAACCCT grant partners, Cerritos College, Norwalk, California; Clackamas Community College, Oregon City, Oregon; and University of Alaska- Anchorage have also implemented this Retail Management Certificate program.

The Workforce Need

Today's consumers expect the grocery industry to provide an excellent shopping experience, and knowledgeable, motivated employees give retailers an advantage in offering that experience. With a workplace that is becoming more fast-paced, competitive and technologically challenging, preparing and educating a skilled and quality food retail workforce now and into the foreseeable future is a top industry priority, particularly for management careers. Historically, the retail grocery industry has had only 14-20 percent of its personnel complete postsecondary certificates or degrees. This fact hampers the sector as management positions increasingly require technical skills and the use of complex systems to manage millions of dollars in revenue and thousands of employees.

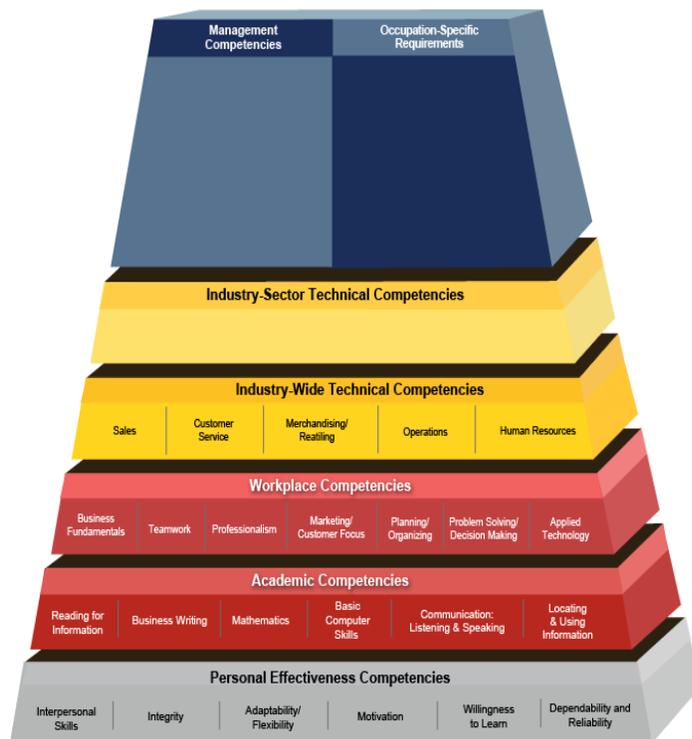
"The local Brookshire Grocery Company came to us for help in training their employees," says Deborah Welch, Department Chair and Professor of Business Management at TJC. "In the past, it was easy to get promoted if you just worked your way up. Now, if you want to reach a certain level of management, you have to have a postsecondary education. Employers now recognize the value of outsourcing training to local postsecondary institutions rather than trying to do it themselves."

Approach

"Partnering and dialogue are critical," says Lindsey Gainer, Professor of Business Management. "You've got to have commitment from employers. We relied heavily on our industry partners,

who are now recruiting for the program themselves. They are using our training for recruitment of new employees as well as for sustaining the existing employee base. The program has improved the applicant pool and has opened the doorway for a better recruitment and hiring process.”

The retail management curriculum, which was developed by industry leaders and educational representatives, includes college-level courses based on standardized competencies and student learning outcomes. These industry-defined competencies align with the U.S. Department of Labor’s Retail Competency Model, which was developed in collaboration with the National Retail Federation. The core competencies in the TJC model are as follows: Business Reading, Business Writing, Decision Making, Business Ethics, Adaptability, Task Completion, Teamwork, Oral Communication, Interpersonal Skills, Merchandising, Inventory Management, Customer Service, Financial Management, Leadership, and Technology. The curriculum is designed to help workers gain an industry-recognized credential and develop key foundational skills that can be applied immediately in their workplaces.



The two year program, which was launched in fall 2012, started with 104 students, with 79 returning and 44 new students entering during spring 2013, all of whom were employees of the Brookshire Grocery Company. Six program participants graduated in May 2013 and ten additional participants graduated in December 2013. The ten competency-based courses that are required for the certificate are designed to prepare students for career opportunities and upward mobility in the retail industry. Courses are offered on the TJC campus using face-to-face, online or hybrid class formats. Credits earned can potentially apply to more advanced educational credentials such as an associate’s degree or a bachelor’s degree in Texas. Regionally, all certificate credits apply directly to an Associate of Applied Science degree in

Business Management at TJC, or to a Bachelor of Applied Arts and Science in Retail Enterprises or Bachelor of Science in Human Resources Development at the University of Texas at Tyler.

“The Tyler Chamber of Commerce is very excited about this initiative,” says Deborah Welch. “It has established a specialized Business Education Committee chaired by Rick Rayford, President and CEO of Brookshire Company.” A September 2012 TJC news release quotes Mr. Rayford, stating “I am a strong supporter of education and believe the Retail Management Certificate program will strengthen our business and increase our employees’ ability to advance within our company.”

“We are committed to making the program truly scalable for multiple retail options, not specific to one particular retail business,” says Professor Gainer. “Foundational skills such as decision making, teamwork, adaptability and interpersonal skills are critical for any retail management position.”

Conclusion

“Competency-based education will be a paradigm shift for the college,” says Professor Gainer. “We are working on realigning our procedures to move from a “seat time” to an “open enrollment” model. The return on investment has been substantial as evidenced by overwhelmingly positive feedback from students.”

Related Links

Tyler Junior College
<https://www.tjc.edu>