

# INITIATIVE

*competency*



## Difficulty



# Initiative

Effective performers are proactive and take action without being prompted. They don't wait to be told what to do or when to do it. They see a need, take responsibility and act on it. They make things happen.

Level	Performance Indicators and Behavioral Examples
<b>4</b> Strategic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Proactively creates and implements organization-wide or extra organizational initiatives.</li><li>• Establishes enterprise-wide sustainable structures and processes to recognize and reward initiative.</li><li>• Sets the tone for the organization to promote initiative as a needed and valued trait.</li><li>• Consistently looks for opportunities to improve the organization; creates new and innovative systems to gain competitive advantage.</li></ul>
<b>3</b> Advanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Takes the initiative even under challenging, new or unusual circumstances.</li><li>• Consistently looks for opportunities to implement new initiatives.</li><li>• Acts with a high degree of independence; does not wait for others to take action.</li><li>• Initiates important programs without being prompted.</li></ul>
<b>2</b> Applied	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Seeks challenges beyond job description (e.g., volunteers for cross functional teams or organization-wide initiatives).</li><li>• Encourages initiative in others; formally recognizes new ideas.</li><li>• Acts without prompting; if something needs to be done, does it; does not wait for direction or the approval of others.</li><li>• Initiates action, while also willingly taking responsibility to manage to completion.</li><li>• Rewards initiative in others; encourages others to be proactive.</li></ul>
<b>1</b> Elementary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Consistently initiates ideas and actions (e.g., usually one of the first to speak out in meetings).</li><li>• Offers opinions without prompting; provides valuable unsolicited input or assistance.</li><li>• Takes the initiative when appropriate for role; takes required action without being prompted.</li><li>• Asks needed questions to stay on top of the current situation.</li></ul>
<b>0</b> Inadequate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Waits to be invited, or told to act; waits for opportunities to come to him/her.</li><li>• Fails to act when needed; requires reminders and follow-up from others.</li><li>• Is passive in meetings.</li><li>• Discourages initiative in others.</li><li>• Accepts the status quo.</li><li>• Does only what's expected.</li></ul>

## Significance

There has never been a high performer identified who isn't proactive. Being a self-starter is an absolutely essential competence if you want to excel.

## Best Ways To Develop

Begin with self-reflection. Clarify what you value. Identify your purpose; this gives you confidence. Match your personal sense of purpose to your potential employer's goals and values. Seek opportunities to act on shared purpose and goals. Don't be afraid to take on a project or act on an idea. Remember good judgment comes from experience and experience comes from bad judgment!

## Improving Your Capacity

Set goals and establish timelines. Go public with your initiatives—make yourself accountable.

If you procrastinate, diagnose “why.”

Begin focusing on the positive outcomes of your initiative—what could be.

Don't be afraid to make a mistake. Take action—remember you can't steal second base if your foot is still on first base.

**Read:** *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen Covey.

**Activity:** Participate in a natural adventure like Outward Bound; gain transferable confidence in a new situation.

## Start Today

Take out a sheet of paper and list the things you tend to put off. Look for patterns.

Try something new today! Drive a different way to work, sleep on the other side of the bed and order something different for lunch.

Break an overwhelming project down to bite-size pieces. In time management this is called the “Swiss cheese” approach. Learn to punch a hole in a big project one at a time.

## Tips

- Don't be afraid to make a mistake.
- Don't always wait to be told what to do.
- Encourage initiative in others.

**Remember,** the key to improving competency is not just learning about the skill but choosing a takeaway and developing an action plan to put new behaviors into practice until it becomes a natural response.

# Development Action Planning Form

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**Step 1:** Choose a competency area to develop.

**Target Competency:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Step 2:** Describe a positive outcome in the target area of competence; include your vision of a preferred future state.

**Goal Statement:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Vision Statement:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Step 3:** List the benefits of achieving your desired end state.

**Benefits:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Step 4:** Brainstorm the actions you might take to achieve your goal. For each, anticipate obstacles and options for overcoming them.

Action Steps	Obstacles	Options
1.		
2.		
3.		

**Step 5:** Finalize your action steps based on your brainstorming in Step 4. Now, list each action you must take to achieve your goal, including time frames and resources you will need.

Action Steps	Time Frames	Resources
1.		
2.		
3.		

Lipscomb's CORE Competency Development Program helps improve the competency areas that are critical to achieving your life and career goals. Through course materials, suggested practice opportunities and personalized coaching, competency-based education focuses on developing a new set of skills you can apply to daily life. Visit [Lipscomb Online](#) for more information on our Certificate, Undergraduate, and Graduate degree programs.