

# GM Success Profile

It takes a lot to manage a food co-op. Co-op General Managers (GMs) are responsible not only for the operations of a retail business, but also budgeting, financial analysis, marketing, information technology and human resources—functions that are provided by corporate headquarters to managers of chain stores. In addition to the demands of the business, co-op GMs must lead an association of member-owners, working harmoniously with the elected board of directors to fulfill the co-op's Ends or mission.

Increasingly intense and sustained competition in our market is shifting the landscape in which co-ops operate, putting a premium on certain key competencies and skills in management. At the same time, other factors are making the GM job more complex and demanding, including: pressure on prices and margin, increasing costs of real estate and development, and calls for a living wage at a time when slow growth makes it ever more difficult to increase labor costs.

The thinking behind the GM Success Profile is that leadership is not innate, it can be developed. Personal attributes and experience, while valuable, are not enough in themselves to lead to success as a food co-op GM. If a new GM starts without all the needed competencies, the co-op will need to ensure a road map for developing those that are lacking. If existing GMs find their jobs increasingly challenging, they can create a development plan to help them achieve the needed competencies.

While all these competencies, skills, experiences and attributes are important, we have highlighted the ones we believe are most critical for success of any GM. In addition, some will be a higher priority for start-ups, expansions and turnarounds, and for co-ops of different sizes. No one competency or skill or experience is by itself a key to success. And no one individual will be strong in all areas. The intent of the Success Profile is to paint a complete picture of what co-ops need in their GMs in an increasingly turbulent environment, and what GMs need to work on to respond the changing market.



The GM Success Profile consists of:

- **Competencies:** A competency is a combination of knowledge, skills and abilities. When competency is achieved, the person can apply the combination in different types of situations adeptly.
- **Skills:** Tactical abilities to accomplish a task.
- **Key Experiences:** Past professional experiences.
- **Personal Attributes:** Qualities that are an inherent part of the person.

National Co+op Grocers and Columinate drew on the experience of both organizations to develop the profile for General Manager success. This profile will be particularly useful for:

- Boards hiring new GMs
- GMs planning to develop their own successors
- GMs who want to close their own skill gaps
- Individuals who want to develop their skills to become future GMs



Columinate

# Competencies



Competency	Description - What it is	Behaviors - What it looks like
! • <b>Strategic thinking</b>	Thinks conceptually, imaginatively and systematically about success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develops long-term (3-5 year) strategy based on analysis of industry, market, and co-op's current and potential capabilities</li> <li>• Understands context co-op is in, including strengths and weaknesses compared to competition, industry, market trends</li> <li>• Extracts key issues from complex, ambiguous and changing contexts</li> </ul>
! • <b>Financial management</b>	Knows meaning of financial variables, how to find them, and how to place them in business context.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interprets all three financial statements to make business decisions</li> <li>• Uses financial data to diagnose and resolve business challenges</li> <li>• Operates and monitors financial systems</li> <li>• Identifies key indicators to link financial and performance information</li> </ul>
! • <b>Business planning</b>	Enables co-op success and growth by creating and operationalizing goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takes vision and strategies and turns them into operational plan(s)</li> <li>• Aligns operational plans to goals of co-op to Ends/Mission while ensuring co-op's long-term prosperity</li> </ul>
! • <b>Building and leading teams</b>	Effectively facilitates the formation of teams by creating a climate of trust and encouraging information sharing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resolves team conflict without damaging relationships</li> <li>• Provides opportunities for others to learn and work together as a team</li> <li>• Promotes cooperation and collaboration among teams and team members</li> <li>• Recognizes and encourages behaviors that contribute to teamwork</li> <li>• Ensures important information flows throughout the co-op</li> </ul>
! • <b>Change management</b>	Successfully aligns stakeholders to effectively implement organization and business changes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishes structures and processes to plan and manage change</li> <li>• Helps staff, Board and members develop clear understanding of why change is needed, what they will need to differently</li> <li>• Anticipates resistance and pro-actively takes action to lessen it</li> <li>• Celebrates near-term successes</li> </ul>
! • <b>Influencing and persuasion</b>	Creates and communicates compelling reasons for their viewpoint to align stakeholders with competing views.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses stories, data and examples tailored to level and experience of audience</li> <li>• Presents multiple "pros" to a decision, and recognizes the "cons"</li> <li>• Accurately anticipates implications of decisions for all stakeholders; plans and communicates accordingly</li> </ul>
! • <b>Developing talent</b>	Develops staff to increase their capabilities, co-op performance, and engagement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accurately diagnoses performance and development gaps</li> <li>• For staff and self, identifies development opportunities, ensures access to them</li> <li>• Provides regular, positive and constructive feedback and coaching</li> </ul>
! • <b>Professional communication</b>	Communicates effectively with multiple audiences using different formats and styles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates active listening (eye contact, asking questions, etc.)</li> <li>• Carries/presents self with poise, professionalism, warmth, confidence and candor</li> <li>• Confident and effective public speaker</li> <li>• Organizes ideas into a clear flow or story</li> </ul>

# Competencies



Competency	Description - What it is	Behaviors - What it looks like
<b>Problem solving</b>	Accurately diagnoses root causes of issues and correctly identifies appropriate resolution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gets complete and accurate information by checking multiple sources</li> <li>• Approaches a task or problem by breaking it down to smaller pieces</li> <li>• Routinely identifies many possible causes</li> <li>• Uses information and data to accurately weigh costs, benefits, risks of potential solutions</li> <li>• Systematically compares alternatives</li> </ul>
<b>Adaptability</b>	Is resilient and keeps moving forward in the face of challenges or new information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repeatedly demonstrates willingness to change (self, process, organization)</li> <li>• Does not get defensive or take contrary opinions personally</li> <li>• Switches to different strategy when initial one is unsuccessful</li> <li>• Willing to modify their opinion in face of contrary evidence</li> <li>• Considers the specific situation, doesn't use past experience as barrier to change</li> <li>• Flexes communication and work styles depending on the needs of the situation and audience</li> </ul>
<b>Entrepreneurial</b>	Appropriately assesses and judges risk to leverage opportunities, seeks innovation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notices and seizes business opportunities</li> <li>• Willing to take calculated risks to achieve goals</li> <li>• Encourages and supports entrepreneurial behavior in others</li> </ul>
<b>Time management</b>	Effectively assesses and prioritizes tasks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accurately assesses and acts upon priorities</li> <li>• Plans use of their time, controls interruptions, completes work efficiently</li> </ul>
<b>Negotiation</b>	Explores positions, alternatives to reach outcomes that gain acceptance of all parties.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manages interpersonal dynamics to keeps discussion on issues</li> <li>• Develops others' and own ideas</li> <li>• Identifies alternatives and builds support for preferred alternatives</li> </ul>

# Skills



## Experience

## Preferred Experience

Experience	Preferred Experience
<b>! Stakeholder alignment</b>	Enables stakeholders to move in same direction through thoughtful communications and reducing competing interests.
<b>! Visioning</b>	Creates and communicates a compelling vision with goals. Uses data to demonstrate accomplishment.
<b>! Messaging for multiple stakeholders</b>	Creates and manages communications appropriate to the audience. Is proactive and strategic about managing the co-op's story for Board, staff and members.
<b>! Managing people</b>	Correctly assesses candidates' abilities and makes good hiring decisions. Evaluates, inspires, recognizes, delegates work and provides feedback. Provides timely coaching and guidance to help others strengthen self or resolve issues.
<b>! Financial reporting</b>	Can create and use meaningful business and financial reports. Creates and manages to a budget.
<b>Managing other functions</b>	Knows enough about co-op retail and admin departments to effectively manage them.
<b>Systems development and monitoring</b>	Grows and pro-actively identifies improvements to how things are done. Creates new, effective processes, verifies their success, makes adjustments as needed.
<b>Project management</b>	Completes projects on time and on budget using resources effectively.
<b>Developing self</b>	Proficient at identifying and closing own knowledge and skill gaps.
<b>Relationship building with board</b>	Devotes appropriate amount of time and resources to strengthen Board-GM relations.
<b>Collaborative</b>	Develops cooperation and teamwork in groups, solutions benefit all parties. Open to hearing multiple voices and participating in democratic processes.
<b>Facilitation</b>	Effectively leads and guides group discussions and activities.
<b>Presentation skills</b>	Delivers polished presentations with organized content flow.

**!** Indicates high importance skills



# Key Experiences

Experience	Preferred Experience
<b>! Retail grocery experience</b>	Experience as a produce, deli, grocery, marketing, store or operations manager. Familiar with how stores operate to meet goals, knows key metrics.
<b>! Experience managing people</b>	More than 3 years managing people, preferable to have experience managing managers.
<b>! Leading a team</b>	Experience leading a team through situation similar to co-op's current situation and/or future goals.
<b>! Track record of success</b>	Prior work experience indicates several successful initiatives of same scope as needed at co-op.
<b>Project management</b>	Experience meets the needs and scope of the co-op's current and/or future operations and goals.
<b>Learning from failure</b>	Has been unsuccessful in a past initiative and has improved skills as a result.
<b>Managing growth and change</b>	Complex change initiatives involving multiple stakeholders.
<b>Worked in a competitive industry</b>	Competition equal to current and future environment of co-op.
<b>Working with a board of directors</b>	Successful navigation of Board governance structure and processes, track record of relationship building with the Board.
<b>Public speaking and presenting</b>	Experience equal to current and future needs of co-op.

**!** Indicates high importance key experiences



# Personal Attributes

Attribute	Description
<b>!</b> <b>Accountability</b>	Is willing and able to hold people accountable for co-op, department, and self success. Willing to be held accountable.
<b>!</b> <b>Courageous</b>	Willing to make unpopular decisions when needed, and to have difficult discussions with stakeholders.
<b>Appreciative</b>	Willing to share credit and inspire others by providing appropriate recognition.
<b>Advocates for organization</b>	Demonstrates focus on needs and success of overall organization through plans, actions and words.
<b>Ease with transparency</b>	Understands importance of sharing information throughout organization when needed.
<b>Open mind</b>	Demonstrates curiosity about processes and people, listens to new ideas and alternatives.
<b>Service mindset</b>	Carries out operational and strategic tasks while demonstrating attention to customers (internal and external) and the co-op's needs.
<b>Self-aware</b>	Aware of own work and communication styles, adjusts as needed to successfully work with others; Diagnoses and recognizes development needs.
<b>Models excellent performance</b>	Demonstrates expectations of others through their own actions.
<b>Self-motivated</b>	Does not require constant oversight, pro-actively identifies opportunities and challenges.
<b>Respectful</b>	Demonstrates respect for others, even when a conflicting opinion is held.
<b>Embraces cooperative structure</b>	Articulates what makes co-ops different, works successfully within cooperative structure.
<b>Discretion</b>	Accurately assesses when to share information and when to keep information private, doesn't gossip.
<b>Values outside expertise</b>	Seeks, listens, and acts as needed to alternative perspectives.
<b>No criminal history</b>	Does not have criminal history that represents risk to the co-op.

**!** Indicates high importance personal attributes

# Prioritizations

The most important competencies, skills, key experiences and personal attributes vary as indicated below.

Co-op Attributes	Competencies	Skills	Key Experiences	Personal Attributes
<b>Co-op with less than \$5m in annual sales</b>	Financial management Problem solving Adaptability Time management Strategic thinking Building and leading teams	Financial reporting Managing people Visioning Managing other functions Systems development & monitoring Relationship building with board	Retail grocery experience Managing people Leading a team Track record of success	Courageous Accountability Values outside expertise
<b>Co-op with \$5 - \$20m in annual sales</b>	Financial management Problem solving Time management Strategic thinking Building and leading teams Professional communication	Financial reporting Visioning Relationship building with board	Managing people Retail grocery experience	Courageous Accountability Self-awareness Models excellent performance
<b>Co-op with multiple locations or &gt;\$20m in annual sales</b>	Strategic thinking Building and leading teams Professional communication Financial management Problem solving Time management Business planning Developing talent	Visioning Relationship building with board	Managing people Track record of success	Courageous Accountability Self-awareness
<b>Start-up co-op</b>	Building and leading teams Financial management Problem solving Business planning Entrepreneurial Adaptability	Visioning Systems development and monitoring Financial reporting Managing people	Managing growth and change Managing people	Courageous Accountability
<b>Co-op with large remodel or expansion project</b>	Problem solving Business planning Entrepreneurial Strategic thinking Change management	Visioning Financial management Project management Relationship building with board	Managing growth and change Project management Managing people	Courageous Accountability Values outside expertise
<b>Co-op in an especially competitive market</b>	Problem solving Entrepreneurial Strategic thinking Change management Adaptability	Visioning Relationship building with board Financial management Managing other functions	Managing growth and change Track record of success Worked in a competitive industry Managing people	Courageous Accountability Self-awareness
<b>Co-op needs a turnaround in business performance</b>	Problem solving Strategic thinking Change management Adaptability Business planning Financial management	Visioning Financial management Relationship building with board	Track record of success Retail grocery experience Managing people	Courageous Accountability Values outside expertise