

Competency Mapping

Competency Mapping is a process of identifying key competencies for a company or institution and the jobs and functions within it. Competency mapping is important and is an essential exercise. Every well managed firm should: have well defined roles and list of competencies required to perform each role effectively. Such list should be used for recruitment, performance management, promotions, placement and training needs identification.

The competency framework serves as the bedrock for all HR applications. As a result of competency mapping, all the HR processes like talent induction, management development, appraisals and training yield much better results.

COMPETENCY MAPPING PROCESS

The competency mapping process does not fit the one-size-fits all formula. It has to be specific to the user organization. It is better to develop models that draw from but are not defined by existing research, using behavioural interview methods so that the organization creates a model that reflects its own strategy, its own market, its own customers, and the competencies that bring success in that specific context (including national culture). Start with small, discrete groups or teams, ideally in two directions-a 'horizontal slice' across the business that takes in a multi-functional or multi-site group, more or less at the same organizational level, and a 'vertical slice' taking in one whole department or team from top to bottom. From that, the organization can learn about the process of competency modelling, and how potential alternative formats for the models may or may not fit the needs of the business.

It is important to focus on one or two key areas of implementation rather than the whole HRD agenda in one scoop. So if recruitment and selection or performance management are the key strategic needs of the business, and where the pain is being felt, then start there. It is advisable to begin with a 'horizontal' slice of the management or senior-most team as the benefits will percolate down to the whole organization.

Methodology for designing: The most effective route to employ recognized best-practice internal research methodology using behavioural event interview (BEI) techniques to selectively sample the target population (supplemented with expert panels and 'Competency Requirement Questionnaires' to engage wider population samples) and so build up the models from the data that emerges. This data should be triangulated against clear top-down input in terms of organizational strategy and business objectives, and also against external research relevant and analogous to the organization's situation-not as a driver, but as a reference point. Once the behavioural data is collected, it should be sorted, categorized and levelled carefully to create models that are both concise and comprehensive, simple and sophisticated. Developing BEI skills within the organization has the added benefit that once the model is complete, it can be used more effectively by transferring these skills to selection interviewing, development assessments, and so on.

International organizations must ensure that the methodology does not screen-out those competencies that do not match the culturally-influenced pre-conceptions of the head office (wherever it is situated) of what high-performance competencies are. This is a common error...the universalist, all-powerful 'global leadership model'.

COMMON STEPS IN COMPETENCY MAPPING

First: A job analysis is carried out by asking employees to fill in a questionnaire that asks them to describe what they are doing, and what skills, attitudes and abilities they need to have to perform it well. There would be a bit that requests them to list down attributes needed to make it up to the next level, thus making it behavioural as well as skill-based.

Second: Having discovered the similarities in the questionnaires, a competency-based job description is crafted and presented to the personnel department for their agreement and additions if any.

Third: Having agreed on the job requirements and the skills and attitudes needed to progress within it and become more productive, one starts mapping the capability of the employees to the benchmarks. There are several index points within the responsibility

level. An almost (but not quite) arbitrary level of attainment is noted against each benchmark indicating the areas where the assessee is in terms of personal development and achievement.

These give an adept HR manager a fairly good picture of the employee to see whether he (or she) needs to perform better or to move up a notch on the scale. Once the employee 'tops' every indicator at his level, he moves on to the next and begins there at the bottom - in short, he is promoted.

This reasonably simple though initially (the first year only) tedious method helps everybody to know what the real state of preparedness of an organization to handle new business (or its old one) because it has a clear picture of every incumbent in the organization.

It helps in determining the training and development needs and importantly it helps to encourage the best and develop the rest. A win-win situation for everyone.

EXAMPLE: L & T INFOTECH

Introduction: Larsen & Toubro Infotech Limited (L&T Infotech), a 100% subsidiary of the US\$ 3.5 billion Forbes Global 2000 and BusinessWeek Asia Top 50 technology-driven engineering and construction major, Larsen & Toubro Limited, offers comprehensive, end-to-end software solutions and services. Leveraging the heritage and domain expertise of the parent company, its services encompass a broad technology spectrum, catering to leading international companies across the globe.

L&T Infotech, a PCMM Level 5 company, has a successful competency-based HR system. Recruitment, training, job rotation, succession planning and promotions-all are defined by competency mapping. Nearly all HR interventions are linked to competency. Competencies are enhanced through training and job rotation. All people who have gone through job rotation undergo a transformation and get a broader perspective of the

company. For instance, a person lacking in negotiation skills might be put in the sales or purchase department for a year to hone his skills in the area.

When the company started competency mapping the whole process took eight months for six roles and two variations. Eventually, 16-18 profiles were worked out. The company uses PeopleSoft for competency mapping. Behavioural competencies do not change every month. Two appraisals are done subsequently... every project-end for skills, and annual for behavioural competencies. There was resistance from the line people, but when the numbers started flowing they sat up. Every quarter, an SBU-based skills portfolio is published. As far as training and development is concerned, instead of asking people to attend classes, they themselves get pulled to the classes. Introduction of competency mapping has also involved introducing skill appraisals in performance appraisals. This has also led to training people on how to assess subordinates on competencies.