



Managing Human Resource Through Competency Mapping

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KEYWORDS

INTRODUCTION

Human resource management is a distinctive approach to employment management which seeks to achieve competitive advantage through the strategic deployment of a highly committed and capable workforce using an array of cultural, structural and personnel techniques. Now a days it is not possible to show a good financial or operating report unless the personnel relations are in order. Over the years, highly skilled and knowledge based jobs are increasing while low skilled jobs are decreasing. This calls for future skill mapping through proper Human Resource Management initiatives. Today, the Indian organizations are witnessing a change in systems, man-agreement cultures and philosophy due to the global alignment of Indian organizations. There is a need for multi skill development among the human resource. Hence, the role of a HR – Manager becomes more important in shaping the competency level of employees which in turn builds up the overall competency of the organisation.

Companies are vastly shifting their approach of having multi-competent employees with knowledge of only one competency. Companies are interested in knowing the present competency level of their employees so that training can be given to improve their performance. This is where Competency Mapping comes in to focus.

In good organisations competency mapping existed already. Traditionally HR Directors and their top management have always paid attention to competencies and incorporated them mostly in their appraisal systems. For example when L&T, LIC or NDDB, NOCIL, HLL, Bharat Petroleum etc. revised their Performance appraisal systems they focused on the assessment of competencies. Role analysis was done and role directories prepared by the Indian Oil Corporation in mid eighties ^[1].

To understand the meaning of Competency Mapping it is essential to understand the meaning of competency and competence.

Competency - It refers to the desired level of attitude, knowledge and skills required to do a job in the best possible manner.

Competence – It refers to the actual level of knowledge, skills and attitude possessed by the employee holding a particular job position.

Competency mapping is the process of finding out the difference between the desired level of competency required by a particular job position and actual level of competency possessed by the employee holding that job position. The process of competency mapping can be used in recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal, succession planning, coaching and various other areas of HR. ^[2]

COMPETENCY IN DETAIL

Any underlying characteristic performing a given task, activity, or role successfully can be considered as competency. Com-

petency may take the following forms: Knowledge, Attitude, Skill, Other characteristics of an individual including: Motives, Values, Self concept etc. ^[3]

Competencies may be grouped in to various areas. In classic article published a few decades ago in Harvard Business Review Daniel Katz grouped them under three areas^[4] which were later expanded in to the following four:

- Technical
- Managerial
- Human and
- Conceptual

This is a convenient classification and a given competency may fall into one or more areas and may include more than one from. It is this combination that are labelled and promoted by some firms as competency dictionaries. A competency dictionary of a firm gives detailed descriptions of the competency language used by that firm. It contains detailed explanations of the combinations of competencies (technical, managerial, human and conceptual knowledge, attitudes and skills) using their own language. For example Team work or Team Management competency can be defined in terms of organization specific and level specific behaviors for a given origination. At top levels it might mean in the case of one organization ability identify utilize and synergize the contributions of a project team and at another level it might mean ability to inspire and carry along the top management team including diversity management. In competency mapping all details of the behaviors (observable, specific, measurable etc.) to be shown by the person occupying that role are specified.

IDENTIFYING COMPETENCIES

Competencies can be identified by Experts, HR Specialists, Job analysts, Psychologists, and Industrial Engineers. They adopt the following methods in combination for competency mapping^[5]:

- Interview
- Group work
- Task Forces
- Task Analysis workshops
- Questionnaire
- Use of Job descriptions
- Performance Appraisal Formats etc.

Such specialists who identify competency in the employees, also try to develop them in each individual employees through various training and development methods. These identified and developed competencies play a major role all HR planning and functions.

ROLE OF COMPETENCY IN RECRUITMENT & RETENTION^[6]

Competency mapping can play a significant role in recruitment and retaining people as it gives a more accurate analysis of the job requirements, the candidate's capability, of the dif-

ference between the two, and the development and training needs to bridge the gaps.

As far as individual's career aspirations are concerned, once the organization gives an employee the perspective of what is required from him to reach a particular position. It drives him to develop the competencies for the same. "Competencies enable individual to identify and articulate what they offer regardless of the job they happen to have at the time so that their organization can see, value and utilize what capability is actually available.

SIGNIFICANCE OF COMPETENCY MAPPING

Competency Mapping is excessively used in the organization to determine the crucial elements and activities. The basic reasons due to which the mapping of the competencies is done are as follows:

- Once the competencies are determined, proper training can be provided to the individuals to work more efficiently on the processes.
- Key performance areas can be improved by understanding the fields where there is a gap between the actual and the desired results.
- If the competencies are determined for the given job, then the person whose career planning phase is taking place can consider those competencies and can be ready for the same.
- Through competency mapping, the individual is preparing himself for the next set of responsibilities.
- With the help of the competency mapping the individual can alter the style of work where the gap exists.
- By overcoming the differences in the desired level and the actual status of performance the individual can feel the increase in the self confidence and the motivation level.
- Competency based approach can lead the individual to derive much efficient results (with more accuracy) as compared to work in a non-competency derived situation.
- Helps the individual to determine the areas where the development is required and thus leads the individual to develop a self development plan.
- Competency mapping leads the individual to understand the actual position and the gap from the desired status of work.
- Competency mapping plays a crucial role in career planning of the individual in the organization.

STEPS IN COMPETENCY MAPPING^[7]

Competency mapping is a process through which one assesses and determines one's strengths as an individual worker and in some cases, as part of an organization. It generally examines two areas: emotional intelligence or emotional quotient (EQ), and strengths of the individual in areas like team structure, leadership, and decision-making. Large organizations frequently employ some form of competency mapping to understand how to most effectively employ the competencies of strengths of workers. They may also use competency mapping to analyze the combination of strengths in different workers to produce the most effective teams and the highest quality work. The steps involved in competency mapping with an end result of job evaluation include the following:

- 1) Conduct a job analysis by asking incumbents to complete a Position Information Questionnaire (PIQ). This can be provided for incumbents to complete, or you can conduct one-on-one interviews using the PIQ as a guide. The primary goal is to gather from incumbents what they feel are the key behaviors necessary to perform their respective jobs.
- 2) Using the results of the job analysis, you are ready to develop a competency based job description. A sample of a competency based job description generated from the PIQ may be analyzed. This can be developed after carefully

analyzing the input from the represented group of incumbents and converting it to standard competencies.

- 3) With a competency based job description, you are on your way to begin mapping the competencies throughout your human resources processes. The competencies of the respective job description become your factors for assessment on the performance evaluation. Using competencies will help guide you to perform more objective evaluations based on displayed or not displayed behaviors.
- 4) Taking the competency mapping one step further, you can use the results of your evaluation to identify in what competencies individuals need additional development or training. This will help you focus your training needs on the goals of the position and company and help your employees develop toward the ultimate success of the organization.

Behavioral event interview

A behavioral interview is a structured interview that is used to collect information about past

behavior. Because past performance is a predictor of future behavior, a behavioral interview attempts to uncover your past performance by asking open-ended questions. Each question helps the interviewer learn about the past performance in a key skill area that is critical to success in the position for which interviewing is done. The interview will be conducted face-to-face whenever possible.

Using the STAR Technique

In a behavioral interview, the interviewer will ask questions about the past experiences. A

useful way to prepare for this style of questioning is to use the STAR technique. The STAR technique is a way to frame the answers to each question in an organized manner that will give the interviewer the most information about the past experience. As you prepare to answer each question, consider organizing your response by answering each of the following components of the STAR technique:

- What was the **S**ituation in which you were involved?
- What was the **T**ask you needed to accomplish?
- What **A**ction(s) did you take?
- What **R**esults did you achieve?

Repertory grid

The repertory grid is a technique for identifying the ways that a person construes his or her experience. It provides information from which inferences about personality can be made, but it is not a personality test in the conventional sense.

A grid consists of four parts.

1. A Topic: it is about some part of the person's experience
2. A set of Elements, which are examples or instances of the Topic. Any well-defined set of words, phrases, or even brief behavioral vignettes can be used as elements. For example, to see how I construe the purchase of a car, a list of vehicles within my price range could make an excellent set of elements.
3. A set of Constructs. These are the basic terms that the client uses to make sense of the elements, and are always expressed as a contrast. Thus the meaning of 'Good' depends on whether you intend to say 'Good versus Poor', as if you were construing a theatrical performance, or 'Good versus Evil', as if you were construing the moral or ontological status of some more fundamental experience.
4. A set of ratings of Elements on Constructs. Each element is positioned between the two extremes of the construct using a 5- or 7-point rating scale system; this is done repeatedly for all the constructs that apply; and thus its meaning to the client is captured, and statistical analysis varying from simple counting, to more complex multivariate analysis of meaning, is made possible.

Critical incident technique

The CIT is a method for getting a subjective report while minimising interference from stereotypical reactions or received opinions. The user is asked to focus on one or more critical incidents which they experienced personally in the field of activity being analysed. A critical incident is defined as one which had an important effect on the final outcome. Critical incidents can only be recognised retrospectively. CIT analysis uses a method known as Content Analysis in order to summarise the experiences of many users or many experiences of the same user.

The **Critical Incident Technique** (or **CIT**) is a set of procedures used for collecting direct observations of human behavior that have critical significance and meet methodically defined criteria. These observations are then kept track of as incidents, which are then used to solve practical problems and develop broad psychological principles. A critical incident can be described as one that makes a significant contribution - either positively or negatively - to an activity or phenomenon. Critical incidents can be gathered in various ways, but typically respondents are asked to tell a story about an experience they have had.

CIT is a flexible method that usually relies on five major areas. The first is determining and reviewing the incident, then fact-finding, which involves collecting the details of the incident from the participants. When all of the facts are collected, the next step is to identify the issues. Afterwards a decision can be made on how to resolve the issues based on various possible solutions. The final and most important aspect is the evaluation, which will determine if the solution that was selected will solve the root cause of the situation and will cause no further problems.

360 Degree Feedback^[8]

In human resources or industrial/organizational psychology, **360-degree feedback**, also known as 'multi-rater feedback', 'outsourced feedback', or 'outsourced assessment', is employee development feedback that comes from all around the employee. "360" refers to the 360 degrees in a circle. The feedback would come from subordinates, peers, and managers in the organizational hierarchy, as well as self-assessment, and in some cases external sources such as customers and suppliers or other interested stakeholders. It may be contrasted with upward feedback, where managers are given feedback by their direct reports, or a traditional performance appraisal, where the employees are most often reviewed only by their manager.

The results from 360-degree feedback are often used by the person receiving the feedback to plan their training and development. The results are also used by some organizations for making promotional or pay decisions, which is sometimes called "360-degree review."

BENEFITS OF COMPETENCY MAPPING

There are some useful benefits of using competency model for the company, managers, and employees as well.

FOR THE COMPANY

- Support corporate Objective, Strategy, Vision, Mission and Culture.
- Establish performance appraisal by a systematic approach for career growth which results in improved job satisfaction and better employee retention.
- Increase the effectiveness of training and professional development programs by linking them to the success criteria.
- Provides clear two way communication process.
- Better understanding of Roles and responsibilities.
- Provide Common standards and same kind of work at equal levels that enable employees to move and work at different parts of the organization.

FOR THE MANAGERS:

- Identify performance level to improve the accuracy of selection process.
- Provide more objective performance standards.
- Provide good communication
- Develops Employer Employee relationship
- Reduces Career related issues.

FOR THE EMPLOYEES:

- Identify the critical skill to perform in the organization.
- Targets, Roles & Responsibilities are very clear.
- Identifies the gap for improvement.
- Provides a systematic approach to improve the skill level.
- Improved Job Satisfaction.

COMPETENCY MODELS^[9]

- **"Organizational" Approaches Models**
- **"HR Systems" Approaches Models**
- **"Team" Approaches Models**
- **Individualistic Models**

"Organizational" Approaches

Elliot Jaques provides a normative model of effective hierarchical organizations with an emphasis on competencies. The elements include the present and potential competencies of individuals along the dimensions of cognitive capacity, valuing the work, and non-disruptive personality.

Peter Senge's approach to a whole organization competency model is captured in his notion of the **"learning organization."** Its essential characteristics include nurturing the growth of new capabilities, transformational learning for survival, learning through performance and practice, and the inseparability of process and content.

"HR Systems" Approaches

Dubois focuses on the **whole human resources system**, but emphasizes competency improvements through training and development strategies and programming: the contingencies are driven by organizational strategy but outcomes are focused on individual employees' competency enhancement.

Charles Snow's **contingency model** links organizational performance to HRM and competency. Strategies depend on extent to which cause-effect relations affecting organizational performance are known and degree of formalized standards of desirable performance.

"Team" Approaches

Campion's model, which applies to professional work, suggests that teams composed of individuals with **complementary competencies** are more effective and have higher levels of job satisfaction than teams whose members have the same competency sets. This is especially true for work that is complex and varied in scope.

Individualistic Models

Traditional Person-Job Match Model

This model assumes that employees have jobs with specific and identifiable tasks. Work is generally standardized and repetitive in an organizational hierarchy. Job performance is readily verifiable. This model works best with organizations defined by stable environments

Strategy Based Model

This model assumes that employees have roles defined by the organization's strategic goals. Work is flexibly defined and often carried out in a flattened, decentralized or matrix structure. Role performance is only partially verifiable. This model functions most effectively in organizations in competitive, complex or highly stressed environments.

The Strategy Development Model

This model assumes that employees with broad, strategic “attributes” will create their own roles which interact to produce the organization's strategy. Work is constantly evolving within a network of organizational relationships. This model is described in terms of organizations in chaotic, unpredictable, or very rapidly changing environments.

Intellectual Capital Model

These models emphasize the linkages and dynamic interaction among human capital, structural capital, and customer (client) capital. These models stress the knowledge that resides in employees and strategies to use it and value it differently.

Companies create and use the Competency models to specify the employee behaviors, knowledge, and motivations that they believe are necessary to produce organizationally critical results. But if the model is not quite right, the organization will suffer. To determine the right model it is essential to look at actual data — assessments of employees' competencies and of the results they achieve.

RECOMMENTATIONS

Competency-based HR is considered the best HR. In India however competency development and mapping still remains an unexplored process in most IT organisations despite the growing level of awareness. The underlying principle of competency mapping is not just about finding the right people for the right job. The issue is much more complex than it appears, and most HR departments have been struggling to formulate the right framework for their organisation.

Unless managements and HR heads have holistic expectations from their HR departments, the competency movement is unlikely to succeed as it requires lot of time, dedication and money. Before an organisation embarks on this journey it has to be very clear about the business goals, capability-building imperatives and core competencies of the organisation. The competency mapping process needs to be strongly integrated with these aspects^[10].

Experts agree that the competency mapping process does not fit all kinds of organisations. It has to be specific and tailored according to the nature of the organization and to the users of the organisation. Hence, it can be suggested that models have to be developed by using the existing research, behavioural interview methods, etc. so that the organisation creates a model that reflects its own strategy, its own market, its own customers, and the competencies that bring success in that specific context.

It is also important to focus on one or two key areas of implementation rather than focusing on the whole HRD agenda in one attempt. Competency mapping can be rather good at providing organisational pain relief when applied effectively. Further, it is advisable to begin with a 'horizontal' slice of the management or senior-most team as the benefits will drip down to the whole organisation.

CONCLUSION

Competency is a set of knowledge, skills and attitudes required to perform a job effectively and efficiently. A Competency is something that describes how a job might be done, excellently. A competence only describes what has to be done, not how. So the Competencies might describe the duties of a Sales Manager for example, such as manage the sales office and its staff, prepare quotations and sales order processing, manage Key Accounts and supervise and motivate the field sales force. The Competencies which might determine excellence in this role could include Problem Solving and Judgment; Drive and Determination; Commercial Awareness; Inter-personal skills etc. Therefore, structuring a good competency mapping model will bring about fruitful changes in the functioning of an organization. Most suitably, by competency mapping, a manager identifies the right path in which he needs to direct his work force. A clear cut career – goal in the mind of a HR-Manager provides strength to the managerial functions, satisfaction among employees, high productivity and organizational harmony. As a conclusion we can say that, it is through the competencies of its employees executives, managers, and individual contributors — that an organization executes its strategy and achieves results that are crucial to its success.

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