

Competency Mapping an Overview

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Abstract: *Competency mapping is the process of identifying the specific skills, knowledge, abilities, and behaviours required to operate effectively in a specific trade, profession, or job position. Competency maps are often referred to as competency profiles or skills profiles.*

We develop competency maps according to the client's needs. That means we can develop a completely customized competency map, or we can build upon an organization's existing competency maps or occupational information. All of our competency maps are all-encompassing, including professional, personal, and technical competencies.

The Competency Group is flexible in our competency map development process. Our many years of competency experience -- including an extensive history working with the Canadian pioneers of the DACUM process -- have allowed us to develop the most efficient way to build competency maps with current job practitioners. Since then, our team has worked with subject matter experts from all industries and sectors to define the competencies of much occupation.

INTRODUCTION

Competency Mapping is a process to identify key competencies for an organization and/or a job and incorporating those competencies throughout the various processes (i.e. job evaluation, training, recruitment) of the organization. A competency is defined as a behavior (i.e. communication, leadership) rather than a skill or ability.

KEY BEHAVIOR INDICATORS

Three important definitions in competency mapping:

Competency Map

A competency map is a list of an individual's competencies that represent the factors most critical to success in given jobs, departments, organizations, or industries that are part of the individual's current career plan.

Competency Mapping. Competency mapping is a process an individual uses to identify and describe

competencies that are the most critical to success in a work situation or work role.

Top Competencies

Top competencies are the vital few competencies (four to seven, on average) that are the most important to an individual in their ongoing career management process. "Importance to the individual" is an intuitive decision based on a combination of three factors: past demonstrated excellence in using the competency, inner passion for using the competency, and the current or likely future demand for the competency in the individual's current position or targeted career field.

Purpose of Competency Mapping:

"Effectiveness of an organization is the summation of the required competencies in the organization."

They are

- Gap Analysis
- Role Clarity
- Selection, Potential Identification, Growth Plans.
- Succession Planning
- Restructuring
- Inventory of competencies for future planning

Methods of competency mapping

Assessment Center

The assessment center methodology involves situational observation to evaluate performance and growth potential of candidates relative to specified job attributes. The approach uses various types of discussion and simulation exercises to reflect real-life demands of the job. Candidates are asked to work through certain scenarios while a trained assessor observes their behavior. The situations are designed to reveal skills and aptitude that help identify which individuals are good matches for the current and future requirements of the job.

Critical Incidents Technique

The critical incidents technique uses data gathering and analysis to identify job-specific behaviors that influence the success or failure of an individual or collective business operation performing a certain job. Data about critical events -- exceptional examples of accomplishment or failure -- is collected through interviews or questionnaires as soon as possible after occurrence. The incidents are then categorized according to associated job behaviors to reveal patterns of performance gaps and strengths.

Interviews

The candidate interview provides first-hand insight into candidate behaviors and is an effective method for collecting relevant information and impressions about prospective employees. Interviewers should be prepared with targeted questions that not only draw out details about tangible job experiences but also give clues about the candidate's general motivation, disposition and outlook. The interview record can be compared against the competency map created for the job to determine which candidate offers the best match for the organization's needs.

Questionnaires

Questionnaires offer another approach for gathering information about job competencies and work performance. Several types used in competency mapping include the common metric questionnaire that highlights work requirements and activities, functional job analysis that describes job duties and characteristics, occupational analysis inventory that specifies work elements for almost all occupations, position analysis questionnaire that ties job characteristics to human characteristics and work profiling system that measures ability and personality attributes. The multipurpose occupational system analysis inventory highlights tasks and competencies for government jobs.

Psychometric Tests

Psychometric testing provides a consistent approach to measuring and quantifying a sample of behavioral attributes. The two main types of psychometric assessment are aptitude tests and achievement tests. Aptitude tests are used to identify natural inclinations in a specific area, such as art or science, and are designed to help predict how well a person would perform in a given specialty after being provided with training.

Achievement tests measure the level of proficiency an individual has achieved in a certain area, such as mathematics, language skills and ability to reason.

WHAT IS COMPETENCY MAPPING?



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). The PIQ 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*. This is developed by 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 HR 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.

Competency mapping process



1) Identify key components of employee job descriptions - the critical points only. Focus on what characteristics and skills are absolutely essential to get the job done. Remember that job descriptions often serve different purposes when posting a position than is needed to explain the role's responsibilities.

2) Clarify roles and eliminate superfluous information - narrow the scope again. Look through your essential words and phrases. Ask yourself whether you have more words than needed to describe the essential characteristics. Then ask yourself whether the role's responsibilities are clear. How do they align to the task? the team's mission? the overall organizational strategy? If they don't, back to the drawing board.

3) Identify required aptitudes, attitudes, skills, and knowledge for roles - critical components of the competencies are what is beneath the surface of employee behavior. Like an iceberg, we see only what is above water, but realize the vast majority is underneath. These values, underlying skills, and approach to work is what you're after. Identify what you need for a successful employee.

4) Synthesize ideas into central themes and define them - no more than 10 competencies. You

will get mired in the assessment and analysis portion if you don't narrow it down to the critical few. Start researching other similar organizations and the competencies they require of employees. Look to the K-12 educational sector. There's quite a bit of knowledge about teacher competencies that will likely align very well with your team.

5) Create a five-scale rubric system - describe what a novice looks like for each competency. What about your expert? What does performance at each level in between look like? What are the skills, aptitudes, and knowledge required at the minimum for each level? Here's where you will want to clearly describe the behaviors exhibited by individuals who perform at each level on the novice-to-expert scale. Ask others to review your list. Would they know what is expected to perform at each level? If not, it's back to the drawing board.

6) Build assessments - organize your set of questions aimed at identifying level of alignment for each of the five scales you've designed. Don't just ask questions that measure whether someone is an expert. Look for open ended questions such as "describe how you would do..." or "explain what you did when you were able to accomplish..." Ask your candidates multiple layered questions. Never, ever, ask a question that can be answered with a "yes or no." You're looking for depth of answer here so that you can evaluate how well it fits to your rubric.

7) Build logistics for roll-out and on-going measurement cycles - this is the fun part! You build a list of competencies, defined them, built rubrics to assess level of competency on a novice-to-expert scale. Now you need to launch your program. Pay attention to your audience. Are they a group of people with test anxiety? Do they prefer written or oral assessment? Would they be excited to show where they are at as far as their performance? The program will lose its luster if you only do it once. Build a plan for continuous assessment - but don't go crazy with it. Twice a year is probably more than enough. Use the time in between to build on the gap areas of your team. Make sure they're moving toward the skillset of your defined expert. However, don't assume everyone will get there. A good rule of thumb is that you'll have the majority of your team in the middle 60%, with 20% of them on either side of the novice-to-expert scale.

After numerous (painstaking?) design meetings, we had accomplished what we set out to do. The end product is a program that is repeatable, specific, and is expected to engage team members in their

own professional development. The next task is to build skill development tools to address any gap areas identified in the assessments. The work continues!

Should you be interested in doing the same for your team, I would strongly recommend you to seek the works of those mentioned above. Having a degree in human resources or organizational development is not essential. Keep it simple. Focus on your goals and the critical elements that are needed to achieve them. Accept that you will build and rebuild and refine along the way.

The Competency Group Experience

The Competency Group has developed competency maps for many sectors and industries such as:

- Electricity
- Mining
- Finance
- Tourism
- Biotechnology
- Food Processing
- Wood Manufacturing
- Government
- Information Technology
- Healthcare
- Non-profit

Conclusion

Competency mapping is useful not from the individual but also from organizations point of view as it defines the competencies required from the position. It can be undertaken through psychological testing. However an area is least explored in India and thus many Indian companies are unaware of this trend.