

Highlights of this issue

- Industry champion, Prashant Shringarpure advocates the importance of Competency Mapping in prudent recruitment
- Ashiesh Tavkarr gives an academician's perspective of the theoretical aspects entailing a Competency Framework
- Monimoy Sen Gupta explicates how the Competency Framework symbolizes a lighthouse guiding our actions in Organizational Development

the editor's column

Success in many ways can be perceived through harmony in the organization – a harmony attained by aligning individual performance to the goals of business. However, when it comes to behaviours and job roles, the path to accomplishing this intention can be lined with ambiguity.

The clarity for this purpose can be sought through a well defined competency framework. One that, as our Industry Champion – Prashant Shringarpure explains, can help recruit individuals prudently, or, measure along various dimensions those optimal characteristics desired, propounds Dr. Tavkarr. Simply put by Monimoy Sen Gupta, a competency framework acts as an anchor in wise retention and a lighthouse in skilful recruitment of individuals.



Mohua Editor | editor@atyaasaa.com

Mohua by qualification is a psychologist bringing this paradigm to the corporate sector. She is passionate about tapping into the infinite capabilities of the human potential. She looks forward to her unique contribution to people in the form of assisting them in showcasing themselves. She therefore strives as an

editor of Knowledge Beans to help people share their experiences and pearls of wisdom to all those who seek it.



bean statement *A great hire has the right combination of skills, competencies and inherent talents*

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Industry champion

Prashant Shringarpure

Recruiting better – how competency mapping can help

Competence, especially human competence, is arguably the most critical element for success in business. It is a well documented fact that employee competence and a supportive organizational structure are necessary for any business to realize its strategic goals as also to adapt to the tough economic conditions of the day.



Prashant Shringarpure is the Founder & CEO of Hexagon Executive Search Pvt. Ltd. which is a talent acquisition partner to some of the leading global corporate brands. His passion is recruitment consulting and he has enabled client organisations to significantly raise their talent acquisition capabilities. Prashant is the foremost authority on Recruitment Process Outsourcing (RPO) in Pune and has been the chief architect of some of the most complex corporate RPO engagements.

When it comes to adding capability or capacity to any team or organization, managers have to make a rather basic 'make-or-buy' choice...either 'make' the talent internally through training or 'buy' it via recruiting. Most companies try and strike a balance between buying and growing. However, during tight economic times when recruiting budgets are severely restricted or even frozen, the emphasis almost always shifts dramatically toward "growing talent." Conversely, when it comes to making tough decisions like, which people to let go, often employee's valuable inherent competencies may be overlooked for short-term expediency.



Competency mapping has thus become an inescapable reality. In spite of the relentless talk about the need to develop "workplace competencies" and "mapping" them, the truth is that many human resource professionals and their organizations are still struggling to do this in a meaningful and systematic way.

If you are a HR or a Recruiting Manager and you want to increase your impact on the business, a downturn is a signal that you should begin to focus on in identifying and building competencies. Why?

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Industry champion - Prashant Shringarpure

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Tight economic times do not change the management demands for most organizations. On the contrary, decisions made during such periods will have a dramatic effect on how organizations can recover when the economy turns. So ensuring that the organization doesn't have any critical holes in their leadership and other mission-critical roles is a vital concern.

Organizations use competency mapping to help mitigate the risk of a vacancy occurring in key management and leadership roles that could impact the organization's ability to perform. In more strategic organizations, the scope of competency mapping is expanded to include high-impact and mission-critical roles throughout the organization. In some progressive organizations, competency mapping is institutionalized enterprise-wide at every level and role within the organization.

While filling gaps identified by competency mapping including traditional approaches like training, many organizations are increasingly adopting a new approach that relies heavily on identifying competencies at the talent acquisition stage. Here is where the HR/Recruiting Manager gets to play a pivotal 'business partner' role.

When times are tough, the need for great leadership talent will actually increase because it takes great leadership to manage efficiently under severe constraints. The act of identifying winning competencies has become a profoundly popular topic among senior leaders in business.

Given the coming economic upturn, the shortage of internal leadership and mission-critical talent will once again become the top HR issue. If you want to increase your visibility and business impact, now is the time to get invested in competency building.

Space for everyone

Monimoy Sen Gupta

A lighthouse and the competency framework

A lighthouse ensures that a ship does not lose its way, by constantly directing a ship towards its destination. An anchor's job is to ensure that a ship stays stationary at the desired place, that is, stays "anchored" to its place.

If the various OD interventions in organizations were to represent a ship, then a competency framework is what plays the dual role of a light house and the anchor depending on the requirement. I will elaborate exactly how.

In the mid sixties the works of Ghiselli and Mischel highlighted that personality traits had little co-relation with job performance. So then what was the best predictor of job performance?

That was the question that was answered by the research done by McClelland (1973). By using John Flanagan's critical incident method and behavioural event interview ('Critical Incidents Technique' - 1954) to distinguish successful and unsuccessful performers, McClelland attempted to identify difference in behavioural characteristics between superior and average performers.

The essence of McClelland's radical departure in approach to job analysis is that where traditional job analysis looks at elements of the jobs, competency assessment studies the people who do the job well, and defines the job in terms of the characteristics and behaviours of these people.



Monimoy Sen Gupta, Assistant Manager - OD, Geometric Ltd, has done his masters in HR from IMED, Pune and is currently handling a gamut of activities arraying organizational development interventions and other developmental initiatives as a part of capability building function.

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Space for everyone - Monimoy Sen Gupta

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Coming to the constituents and the definition of competency:

'**Competency**' is the vital behavioural skills, knowledge and personal attributes that are translations of organizational capabilities and are deemed essential for success. They distinguish exemplary performers from adequate performers.

Its constituents: Skill, Knowledge, Personal Attributes, Behaviour.

Now with the background and definition in place, allow me to get back to the ship and the lighthouse. A competency framework plays a vital role in design, implementation and most importantly tracking if not measuring of various OD and L&D interventions.

It is essentially a grid that captures the competency requirement of the various jobs in an organization.

There are various uses of this framework:

Recruitment

The usage of a framework actually starts right from the time of recruitments. There are various behavioural tools that assess the accuracy of a person to match him/her to the job. Now the tricky part, the success of the match lies as much in the accuracy of the tool as it does on the framework that the organization has.

Training

The success of a training lies on how relevant the training is to the intended participants. The one way that the degree of relevance can be highest is by ensuring that there is role based framework in place. What this would bring is a clear profiling of the participants, which is a very important aspect of any training design.

Succession Planning

As an intervention its criticality is unquestioned. However its success is dependent primarily on its design. One of the common mistakes made is when it is done for the current person in the role, rather than the role itself. The role of a well documented competency framework is vital for designing the guidelines of succession planning.



Coaching

The best form of coaching is competency based coaching. This is so because, this ensures that the relationship is always moving towards the right direction.

A coaching program usually follows the path of:

- Assessment of current competency level
- Measuring the difference in current and required level of competencies
- Designing various "developmental" modules that will help minimize the gaps

The accuracy and effectiveness of all the above mentioned is heavily dependent on the existence and accuracy of a competency framework.

Measuring Effectiveness of Interventions

To my best knowledge the most proficient way of measuring effectiveness of interventions is by the following steps:

- Step1.** Create a competency framework for the organization (preferably) or else at least the critical positions.
- Step2.** Ensure that this framework forms the base of all interventions whose effectiveness you wish to measure.
- Step3.** Conduct a pre assessment to ascertain the "current" proficiency level.
- Step4.** Ensure that the design of the intervention is kept in mind as the "to be" proficiency level as prescribed in the framework.
- Step5.** Do a post intervention assessment to ascertain the "new" proficiency level.

This is one way of clearly showcasing the "impact" or "effectiveness" of a program. As discussed earlier, competencies are one of the best ways of predicting job performance. Hence, if one can showcase the "growth" of one's competency thereby making one better equipped to perform one's role, it can clearly indicate that the intervention is a success.

In other words, if we can show that the ship is following the light house correctly, the assumption that it is on the right course is a fair one.

An academician's viewpoint

Dr. Aashiesh Tavkarr

The competency framework

Dr. Aashiesh Tavkarr is an Educator, Motivational speaker and a Columnist among other esteemed designations held. He is the former HOD (IB) in MITCON B school and an approved professor with the Canterbury University in their MBA (HR) program. Apart from his contribution to young minds in various B schools and Management colleges, Dr. Tavkarr is an authority on NLP and has written on NLP, HR, Management and Change Management extensively.

The world is in the grip of what is termed as a global slowdown or as some know it - recession. Organizations today are struggling to keep themselves afloat. In this uncertain environment, Human Resource has become a major issue. Today organizations don't have the time and money to spend on training the manpower - the challenging task before organizations is to get the right person for the right job. So the million dollar question is "How do I know that this person is the right person?" This is where new techniques have come to the rescue of today's HR managers/recruiters. One of them is Competency Framework and Assessment Centres.

So let us try and understand competency based framework. Before we move further, let me clarify that this is an attempt to explain competency mapping through a purely theoretical and academic perspective. It is my endeavour to make people familiar with this model conceptually.

The word competency is used in everyday life to refer to the person's ability or capacity to be successful in a particular task. The competency approach focuses on what the person can do rather than what the person knows. A competency is observable behaviour not espoused behaviour. Some of the major contributors to the science of assessment centres and competency mapping define competency as follows:

Jacob defines Competency as "An observable skill or ability to complete a managerial task successfully." McClelland defines Competency as "An underlying characteristic of an individual that is causally related to criterion reference effective and/or superior performance in a job or a situation."

Hogg defines Competency as "Characteristics of a manager that lead to demonstration of skills and abilities, which result in effective performance within occupational areas. Competency also embodies that capacity to transfer skills and abilities from one area to another."

It is McClelland's definition that has found world wide acceptance among the practitioners for various reasons. Hence let us look at it in greater detail.

Let us scrutinize McClelland's definition:

- A) "Underlying Characteristic"** - Competencies are underlying characteristics of people and indicate "ways of behaving or thinking, generalizing across situations, and enduring for a reasonable period of time"
The Competencies have five characteristics, namely:
- 1) Motives** (things a person consistently thinks about or wants that cause action, motives, drive, direct and select behaviour towards certain actions) - For example, achievement motivation - people consistently set challenging goals for themselves, take responsibility for accomplishing them and use feedback to do better.
 - 2) Traits** (physical characteristics and consistent responses to situations) - Good eyesight is a physical trait of a pilot. Emotional self control and initiative are more complex consistent responses to situations.
 - 3) Self Concept** (a person's attitude, value or self image) - A person's values are reactive or respondent motives that predict what a person would do in the short run. For example, a person who values being a leader would be more likely to exhibit leadership behaviour.
 - 4) Knowledge** (information a person has in a specific work area) - For example, an accountant's knowledge of various accounting procedures.
 - 5) Skill** (the ability to perform certain mental or physical tasks) - For example, mental competency includes analytical thinking. The ability to establish cause-effect relationship.

The type or level of competency has significance in human resource planning. A skill or knowledge can be easily developed. Training is the most cost effective way to nurture these competencies. Motives, self concepts and traits are more difficult to train and develop. All these need to be a part of the selection process.

- B) "Causal Relationship"** - Motives, traits and self-concept predict skill, behaviour and action that in turn predict job performance outcomes. **Motive / Trait >> Behaviour >> Outcome.**
Competencies always include an intent, which is the motive or trait force, that directs action towards an outcome. Behaviour without intent does not form a competency. Behaviour can include thoughts and feelings, where they precede and/or succeed action.
- C) "Criterion Referenced"** - This is the most important part of the definition of competency. A characteristic of an individual is not a competency unless it predicts something meaningful in the real world. The criterion most frequently used in competency studies is 'superior performance'. Thus, the characteristic is a competency if it can predict 'superior' or effective performance.

Once an organization/HR/recruiter understands that this framework is very powerful in getting you the right kind of people for the job, the next step is to set up an assessment centre before you get into the process of recruitment. This process is not only to be done while talking to the person on board but also when promoting the person or finding out talent within the organization for putting people on the fast track programs.

I am sure this attempt of mine has helped you understand the basics of what goes into a Competency Based Framework.