

Competencies for Building Performance Excellence: A Study in a Fertilizer Unit

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Competency has a wide meaning and includes knowledge, abilities, skills and behavior exhibited in accomplishing a task. Competency mapping is a tool for mapping the competencies required for executing roles or jobs. The identification and fixing of competencies differ according to the nature of the organization. This paper examines the current practice in a fertilizer company operating at level 4. The methodology for calculation of gap in the required proficiency level is scrupulously discussed. The proficiency gap is a useful metric for the organization to formulate its development and competitive strategies. The level wise approach is adopted for calculating the competency gap in the fertilizer unit.

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Introduction

Human resource management is a distinctive approach to employment management and 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 (Isthiak Uddin et. al., 2012). The term competency was introduced and popularized by David McClelland (1973). The ability to deploy the skills is precedence to maximize human capacities, utilization and generate revenue. In future, skill mapping through proper HRM initiatives will be the trend, as highly skilled and knowledge based jobs are increasing. Indian organizations are also witnessing a change in systems, internal cultures and philosophy due to the global alignment. The multi-skilling environment requires redesigning of jobs and redefining of roles. These roles form the important sources for identifying the competencies of the organization. Competency mapping is a way of assessing the strengths and weak-

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nesses of an employee or an organization. Competency mapping has a wide variety of applications in managing and compensating the best in the organization. The organizational strengths in areas like teamwork, leadership, and decision-making can be further developed as core competencies of the organization.

In view of its importance and potential, many global and domestic organizations are using and applying competency based technique to combine the strengths of different employees to produce the highest quality work. This type of assessment can help them prepare for a career change or advancement in a specific job field. The capabilities have to match with the capacity to attain the desired outcome (Boyatzis, 1982). Further, building of core competencies is a key corporate strategy for organization's development and competitive advantage.

Theoretical Review

Competency mapping is a process through which one assesses and determines one's strengths as an individual worker and as part of an organization (Ishtiaq Uddin et al, 2012). Competency mapping includes behavioral components related to two areas:

- Emotional intelligence or emotional quotient (EQ)
- Human relational and decision-making.

Organizations employ competency mapping to understand the employee strengths for deployment at workplace.

Competency mapping is also an effective tool to analyze the combination of strengths in different workers to produce the most effective teams and the highest quality work. Quinn Faerman, Thompson, and McGrath (1990) indicated that competencies were associated with knowledge and skills for implementing certain assignments or projects effectively. Spencer and Spencer (1993) similarly defined competency as a characteristic of an individual that is causally related to criterion-referenced effective and/or superior performance in a job or situation. Parry (1998) defines competency as a cluster of related knowledge, skills and attitudes that affects a major part of one's job that correlates with performance on the job that can be measured against well-accepted standards and that can be improved via training and development.

The components of competency are knowledge, understanding, skills, attitude and other characteristics like motives, values, trait, self concept (Knowles, 1975). Competencies are the measureable skills, knowledge and attitude. Knowledge is awareness, understanding and information of facts, events and is a cognitive competency. Knowledge by itself is not sufficient to carry out an occupation or tasks. Skill is the ability to carry out a given task successfully or accurately with fewer errors. Skill is the ability to actually perform a physical or mental task which involves psychomotor coordination. Attitudes are predispositions to individuals, events, situations, issues etc. Attitudes are usually conceptualized as a positive approach/

negative avoidance behavior. Attitudes are formed with experience.

Values are the generalized beliefs and attitudes in our personality. Values are more permanent than attitudes. Motives are the inner drives that direct the actions. These are action oriented which direct and select behavior towards certain actions or goals. Some of these are: motive for affiliation, achievement, influence etc. (McClelland, 1973). Traits are the consistent response patterns to situations. Traits include cardinal, primary and secondary traits (Allport, 1937).

Competencies may be classified into three types: managerial, generic and technical or functional (Srinivas R.Kandula, 2013). Managerial competencies are applied horizontally and vertically for analysis and decision-making, team leadership, change management, control, planning, organizing etc. Generic skills are essential for all staff, regardless of their function or level for communication, program execution, processing tools, linguistics, etc. The technical or functional competencies are required to perform any job in the organization within a defined technical or functional area of work, i.e. environmental management, industrial process, investment management, finance and administration, and human resource management. Based on intensity and complexity the competencies may be arranged in a hierarchical sequence as primary, proficient and advanced (Srinivas R.Kandula, 2013). The competency may also take hierarchy in the following order: practical competence, foundational competence, reflexive competence and

applied competence (Jurgen Dorn & Markus Pichlmair, 2007).

Practical competency is the employee's demonstrated ability to perform a set of tasks. Foundational competence is the demonstrated understanding of what and why one is doing. Reflexive competence may be classified as the employee's ability to integrate actions with the understanding of the action so that he / she learns from those actions and adapts to the changes as and when they are required. An employee's demonstrated ability to perform a set of tasks with understanding and reflexivity is known as applied competence. Lyle M. Spencer and Signe M. Spencer (1993) explain that behavior is incompletely defined without intent. The Iceberg model categorizes the competencies as visible (surface) and hidden (core) competencies where the motives, self concept, traits form the bottom of an iceberg and the perception, cognitive skills and knowledge form the upper part of the iceberg. Shipman et al (2004) have proposed a model linking competencies with training and performance. The gap in performance is to be bridged through training.

Businesses use competency mapping to match the capabilities and talent of personnel with specific job tasks and organizational needs. The technique involves conducting a job analysis to identify core skills and behaviors required to perform the role, drafting a job description based on the key competencies and aligning resources to fulfill the competency needs. Competency map makes it easier for firms to identify qualified can-

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didates, assess performance, focus on training efforts and enhance overall productivity. Some competency mapping approaches include assessment center, critical incident technique, interviewing, questionnaires and psychometric tests.

Coromandel International

The study is to analyze the existing practices relating to competency based performance management system in Coromandel International, a reputed private organization with business interests in fertilizers, sugars, sanitary ware, finance, confectionery etc. The present survey was conducted in a fertilizer unit in Visakhapatnam. The company provides employment to 500 employees. The organization follows progressive policies and is open to innovative changes. There are 27 departments and is structured on functional cum operations basis. However, accurate data pertaining to 20 departments and 17 immediate officers are available and included in the study. The gap analysis was done to estimate the competencies deficiency. The difference between the required proficiency level and the acquired proficiency level is the deficiency in the current competencies.

Coromandel International has been implementing competency based perfor-

mance management system and operates at fourth level. The level defines the position maturity. The organizational strategies are translated into targets through Balance Score Card. The core competencies form the nerve centre for the organization. The competencies are mapped through assessment sheet and targets are fixed. The performance of the employee is evaluated based on competencies. The process flows through different stages and is applicable to managerial and non-managerial staff. The assessment is done based on competency dictionary compiled by the management for both managerial and non-managerial categories.

Competency Identification

Competency Assessment focuses on how well the employee is performing the required job skills in relation to specified performance standards.

First Stage: In Coromandel International, the process starts by collecting the list of all the existing employee positions, both function and department-wise, from the HR department. The role profiles of the functional head/ department head are also vetted.

Second Stage: In the next stage, role analysis for non-managerial and managerial staff position is conducted using the competency work sheet by interviewing the superiors regarding the positions to whom the role holder has to report, work groups he has to report, work groups that each non-managerial position and managerial position has to coordinate and work with, the ac-

tivities that they are required to perform, competencies (knowledge, skills, and behaviors) that they should possess etc., in order to perform their job effectively.

Third Stage: Assessment of the competencies is done with the help of work sheet.

Competency worksheet identifies the on-job behavior of the person and the critical competencies for the job/role.

Competency Work Sheet

- *Job/Role Title:* The title of the position whose role analysis is being done.
- *Location :* Work place/ department
- *Step 1 :* Identify the most important clients who generally receives/ gives products and services from/to this role/ job
- *Step 2.1:* Identify key accountability i.e.; what the job/role is responsible for doing.
- *Step2.2:* Interview each of the clients who either receives or gives services to the role/ job holder (to know his key accountability).
- *Step 3:* Under this step the views of all the clients are generalized to evaluate the accountability/ output i.e., to identify the behavior of the role holder.
- *Step 4:* Identifying critical behavioral competencies.

The sample worksheet for identifying the critical competencies of the job is provided in Annexure 1.

Final Stage: In the final stage, the level of competency is benchmarked with the identified competency through assessment and general definition.

Levels

Then the general definition for every competency was first developed and then each of the competencies is also defined at the benchmark levels.

Learner (L1): Needs supervisor's initiative to show the behavior.

Independent (L2): Can show the behavior independent of supervisor.

Coach (L3): Not only shows the behavior independently, but also helps others to show the behavior.

Champion (L4): Provides breakthrough in long pending issues or builds systems/processes that address the issues relevant to that competency.

Gap Analysis

The actual competencies are calculated and the difference between the required competencies and the actual competencies is recorded as deficiency in competencies. This gap analysis is utilized to prepare the training schedule for the employees on a continuous basis. The formula is:

Gap = required competencies – actual competencies

The analysis is given in the following sequences:

1. Department wise competencies
2. Competencies of the immediate officer of each department
3. Competencies of the team members under each immediate officer

4. Competencies gap for the organization.

Department wise Competencies

The data from 27 departments were analyzed and the recorded gaps departments wise are presented in descending order in Table 1.

Table 1 Department wise Competencies Gap

Department	Gap Identified	Department	Gap Identified
Welfare & Administration	1.582	Costing	0.625
Field(BAGGING)	1.4	Sulfuric Acid	0.597
Distribution Accounts	1.25	Pilot Plant	0.5
Field(SND)	1.25	Quality Control & Laboratory	0.468
Garage	1.182	SND	0.458
Engineering & Inspection	1.143	DGTG	0.432
Electrical	1	Field	0.409
General Accounts	1	Mateial & Stores	0.214
Sr. Assistant	1	Payroll	0.143
Field(AAST)	0.857	Cash Office	0
Information Technology	0.778	Engineering & Drawing	0
Complex A&B	0.730	Excise	0
Field(Utility)	0.714	Shared Service Centre	0
Wharf	0.651		

Average Gap in competencies: 0.79

Competencies of Immediate Officer

There are 20 immediate officers (I/O) for non-management staff (Table 2). Under each immediate officer there are team members. Each team member has analyzed his/her immediate officer (I/O). The last three immediate officers were not considered as they show no deficiency in proficiency. The overall competency gap is calculated for each immediate officer.

Competencies of Team Members

The data pertaining to competencies gap of each member under each immediate officer (I/O) team are calculated.

Table 2 Competencies Gap of Immediate Officers

Department Immediate Officer	Gap	Department Immediate Officer	Gap
1	1.56	11	0.65
2	1.33	12	0.65
3	1.16	13	0.60
4	1.14	14	0.47
5	0.85	15	0.46
6	0.83	16	0.21
7	0.82	17	0.20
8	0.82	18	0.00
9	0.78	19	0.00
10	0.66	20	0.00

The competencies are framed earlier

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Competencies Gap for the Organization

The calculation has been done by deducting the required proficiency level (RPL) from the current proficiency level (CPL) of each single competency of each of the non-management staff and then calculating average for Coromandel based on the sum.

Table 3 Members Under Each Immediate Officer

Immediate Officer	Number of Members under each Immediate Officer	Immediate Officer	Number of Members under each Immediate Officer
1	8	11	12
2	17	12	7
3	12	13	12
4	3	14	12
5	15	15	7
6	4	16	2
7	4	17	5
8	4	Total	152
9	1	Gap in Competencies	0.77
10	27		

1. The average RPL and average CPL have been found for each of the non-managerial staff, immediate officer and the department.
2. Again the total average of RPL and average CPL of all non-managerial staff, immediate officers and departments are calculated.
3. Deducting the total average CPL from average RPL, total average gap of the unit has been found (i.e., average RPL - average CPL = Gap).

The average gap for non-managerial staff, immediate officers and 27 departments of Coromandel International of

Visakhapatnam unit is 0.77, 0.69 and 0.79 respectively.

Implications

The Coromandel International was benefitted by the implementation of competencies based performance evaluation system. The organization has upgraded itself to the maturity level 4, further integrated HR systems were established. The compensation is linked to competen-

The company is in the process of transforming into a knowledge organization with a learning culture.

cies and HRD is a continuous cycle. The feedback mechanism was utilized to correct the system. The company is in the process of transforming into a knowledge organization with learning culture.

Conclusion

The competencies cover all the aspects which are needed to be there in an employee to do his job effectively. It was found that each and every employee at different job positions requires competencies but of different nature and level. These competencies are important not only from the organizational perspective but also for individual growth. Coromandel International practices the competencies related assessment. The system is under implementation for 5 years and has matured to fourth level. But further critical assessment of data relating to non-managerial category is required to examine the sustainability of the system. The overall rating is satisfactory and is able to identify the training requirements.

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Annexure 1 Competency Worksheet for Identifying Critical Competencies for the Job

Introduction: Competency modelling identifies the On- the- job behavior that allows people to be successful using this worksheet, you will identify the critical competencies for the job/role.			
Job/Role title:		Location:	
Step 1: Identify the most important clients (Clients can include a supervisor, colleagues, customers, employees, other stake holders) who generally receive the product and / or services from the Job/ role			
S.No	Clients names		
1			
2			
3			
4			
Step 2: Identify key accountabilities(what the job/ role is responsible from doing)			
Clients/ Customer		Accountability/Key output	
Step 3: Identify the behavioral examples (how would the clients evaluate the quality of the accountabilities/output			
Timely service/ response to issues			
Professional			
Knowledgeable			
Open, tactful, honest, calm, polite			
Good communication skill			
Providing recommended solutions			
Strategic focus			
Ability to analyze and solve problems by developing innovative and flexible solutions			
Step 4: select critical behavioral competencies(maximum 6 to 10)			
Competency	Ranking	Competency	Ranking
Analytical thinking		Initiative	
Building partnership		Innovation	
Conceptual thinking		Integrity	
Concern for image impact		Managing organization	
Continuous development		Organizational awareness	
Conflict management		Organizational commitment	
Creating customer/client focus		Partners within stakeholders	
Customer/client development		Planning, organizing and coordinating	
Decisive insight		Problem solving/ judgment	
Developing others		Relationship building	
Empowerment	Results orientation		
Engaging external partners	Service orientation		
Flexibility	Strategic orientation		
Impact and influence		Team work and cooperation	
Improving operations		Negotiation skills	

NAME

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UNIT HEAD

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