USING COMPETENCY MODELS TO PLAN THE TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OF JOBHOLDERS

Competency models can be a powerful tool when used in developing training and development strategies of jobholders. Ways to use this approach are described in this chapter.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most common uses for a competency model is in guiding the training and development of jobholders. The competency model identifies the skills and personal qualities that are needed for effective and superior performance in the job. It therefore specifies areas for the training and development of jobholders.

In the case of the twelve competency models developed for this Water Research Foundation Project, the technical and non-technical competencies in the main part of the competency model are the ones for training and development focus. These are the competencies that jobholders will need to develop or strengthen. The Foundational Competencies listed are not the focus for training and development going forward, since they will have been developed by almost all employees before entry into the position.

WAYS TO DEVELOP COMPETENCIES OF INDIVIDUAL JOBHOLDERS

There are essentially three ways to develop competence for any particular job, in addition to on-the-job experience:

- Formal training courses
- Self-development using professional development plan
- Coaching by a manager or mentor

We describe these here, and also offer an approach for you to use in creating a training and development program for your employees that works with in-house and/or external resources.

Formal Training Courses to Develop Competencies

One way to develop competencies is to send jobholders to training courses that provide instruction in knowledge and skills needed to perform specific job responsibilities. Courses may be offered on or off-site and by the company's own instructors or by vendors. Some courses use a classroom format, while others are provided to individuals working at a computer. Training courses are the primary means for developing technical competencies and are also commonly used to develop basic computer skills and skills for certain job roles, such as managing people, selling, and providing customer service.

Self-Development Using Professional Development Plans

Training is not the only way to develop competencies. An alternative approach is to create a program in which jobholders create professional development plans and then work at these plans individually to develop specific competencies. In this approach, jobholders and their managers are often provided with a resource guide, organized by competencies, that suggests many different activities designed to develop each competency. The types of activities include:

- Reading specific books or articles
- Taking self-study courses
- Performing suggested activities to practice using the competency
- Observing people who have mastered the competency
- Interviewing experts in the competency to learn their approaches
- Having your manager or a colleague observe you in a situation where you attempt to use the competency and then provide feedback
- Attending meetings or events where you can observe and practice the competency
- Taking classroom courses aimed at developing the competency

Professional development plans are best developed by jobholders and their managers, who consult in the creation of the personal development plans and can provide coaching and support to the jobholders in their developmental activities.

Using Coaching to Develop Competencies

Another way to develop competencies is provide coaching to job holders on specific competencies. Coaching can be provided by the supervisor on-the-job, as well as by professionals or co-workers, and can address technical, personal and leadership and managerial competencies.

Coaching by the jobholder's supervisor is a powerful way to develop competencies for several reasons. First, the supervisor is knowledgeable about the jobholder's performance level on entering the job. Second, the supervisor is often in a position to observe the jobholder's performance over time and can offer "just-in-time" feedback and support. Third, the supervisor can change job assignments for the jobholder in order to support development is specific areas.

Coaching by professional coaches is most frequently used for competencies that involve difficult-to-learn behaviors, for example, in the areas of leadership (e.g. Influencing Skills) as well as for individual competencies such as Flexibility and Adaptability. Coaching assignments can last from a few days to a few months. Because coaching by external professionals can be costly, it is often limited to jobholders in positions of leadership and management.

COMPETENCY-BASED TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT APPROACHES FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION

Using a Competency Model as a Basis for Assessing Available Training

An initial step in planning competency development programs for a particular job is to compare the main technical and non-technical competencies in the competency model with the curriculum of available courses for the jobholders. To do this, you will need the competency model and outlines of the courses currently offered to jobholders.

Create a table in Word or Excel using a format like the one below:

Competencies for Job	Title of Course A	Title of Course B	Title of Course C
Competency 1 Name			
Competency 2 Name			
Competency 3 Name			
Etc.			

In the table's open cells, enter codes like the symbols on the left, with their meaning shown below.

Code	Meaning
CF	Competency is fully and effectively addressed
CP	Competency is partly addressed
0	Competency is not addressed

After completing the matrix, prepare a list of the job competencies and aspects (or behavioral indicators) of competencies that are not addressed. For one example, you may want to develop the competency of Concern for Effectiveness, focusing on the aspect "Develops ways to speed or automate routine or repeated processes" (from Competency Glossary, Appendix B).

Once you have completed this list, you can use it to plan ways to develop these competencies and aspects of competencies. For example, you could:

- Identify additional courses that provide training in the unaddressed and partly addressed competencies and add these courses to the training plan for jobholders
- Modify or add to the curriculum of an existing course, so that it addresses additional competencies or aspects of competencies
- Arrange for the development of a new course to address one or more competencies that are not sufficiently addressed in existing courses
- Plan to develop some of the insufficiently addressed competencies by having jobholders create and implement personal development plans

The steps that you identify should be considered for inclusion in a Training Development and Acquisition Plan for the Department in which the job is located.

Creating a Training Plan for Jobholders

Once you have identified a set of existing and planned courses for jobholders, you will need to prepare a table like the one below, to track the progress of jobholders in completing the set of planned courses.

Jobholders	Course A	Course B	Course C	Course D
Sandy Beech	MAY 2011	DEC 2009	FEB 2010	JUL 2010
Ray O'Flite	JUL 2011	DEC 2009	(SEP 2011)	(FEB 2012
Helena Handbasket	(FEB 2012)	(APR 2012)	(SEP 2012)	(FEB 2013)
Etc.				

Note that in the table above, courses that have not been completed yet are shown in parentheses.

CREATING A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION

As noted earlier, in professional development programs jobholders work on their own, with the support of their managers, to carry out activities designed to develop a few, targeted competencies. The typical components of a professional development program include:

- A tool for assessing jobholders on the competencies identified for their job
- A development planning form on which to write two or three competencies targeted for development, a set of activities that the jobholder plans to complete, with the aim of developing or strengthening each targeted competency, and a resource guide with ideas for developing all or some of the competencies included in the competency model
- A prescribed process in which the jobholder and his/her manager independently assess the jobholder on the competencies for his/her job, discuss and agree on a small number of competencies to target for development, prepare a professional development plan, and periodically meet to review, discuss, and revise the plan

Professional development planning works best with well-educated, motivated employees, who are comfortable working on their own.

A Professional Development Planning Form can be found at the end of this section. Although it is possible to create customized and polished tools and documents to support this process, you can also do something simpler that is easy to implement, by following the steps below.

Step 1.   Select an Existing Resource Guide and Map it to the Competencies in the Job

Here are three comprehensive resource guides to consider:

Successful Manager's Handbook, by Susan Gebelein and others (2004.)
FYI: For Your Improvement, by Michael Lombardo and Robert Eichinger (2004.)
The Value Added Employee, by Edward Cripe and Richard Mansfield (2001.)

Carefully review the content of the resource guide you select, compare this content to the descriptions of the competencies in your competency model, and prepare a competency mapping table with a format like this:

Competencies from Competency Model	Related Competencies in Resource Guide	Pages from Resource Guide

None of the suggested resource guides includes technical competencies, so you will only be able to map the non-technical ones. When you have identified a resource guide to use, purchase a copy of it for each jobholder.

Step 2. Prepare Instructions for Using a Copy of the Competency Model as a Crude Assessment Tool

The instructions, which will be used by each jobholder and his/her manager, might say:

1. Enter the following information:
   a. Name of Jobholder Being Assessed: _____
   b. Jobholder's Job Title: _____
   c. Your Name: _____
2. Read the description of each of the main competencies in the competency model, on pages ___.
3. Next to each competency, write one of these codes:
   a. E   Excellent
   b. G   Good
   c. DO   Development Opportunity
4. Based on your ratings, identify two or three of the competencies that the jobholder should consider targeting for development:
   a. _____
   b. _____
   c. _____

Attach the instruction sheet to a copy of the competency model.

Step 3. Prepare Instructions for the Overall Process of Professional Development Planning

The instructions might use or adapt the following language:

1. Jobholder and his/her manager should set a date for a development planning meeting.
2. Prior to the meeting, the jobholder and his/her manager should each individually assess the jobholder on the main competencies for the job, using a copy of the competency model with the assessment instructions attached.
3. At the development planning meeting, the jobholder and his/her manager should:
    a. Share and discuss their assessments of the jobholder on the competencies
    b. Identify two or three competencies for the jobholder to target for development
    c. Use the selected resource guide and the mapping table to identify several possible actions that the jobholder might take to develop each targeted competency
    d. Identify projects or on-the-job activities to practice and strengthen targeted technical competencies which are not included in the resource guide
    e. Enter the selected actions on the Development Planning Form attached to these instructions
4. Following the development planning meeting, the jobholder should review and revise the draft professional development plan and submit it to his/her manager within 48 hours.
5. The manager and jobholder should agree on any revisions to the professional development plan and then sign it.
6. Every three to six months the jobholder and manager should meet to review progress against the development plan and update the plan by adding new developmental activities or new targeted competencies.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Jobholder's Name:	Date:
Job Title	Jobholder's Manager:

Jobholder's Signature: _____

Manager's Signature: _____

Complete the sections below for two or three targeted competencies.

First Competency Targeted for Development: _____

Activities to Develop This Competency	**Planned Completion Date**	**Actual Completion Date**

Second Competency Targeted for Development: _____

Activities to Develop This Competency	**Planned Completion Date**	**Actual Completion Date**

Third Competency Targeted for Development: _____

Activities to Develop This Competency	**Planned Completion Date**	**Actual Completion Date**

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