

Competency Mapping: A Tool for HR Excellence

Md.Ishtiak Uddin

Department of Business Administration, University of Asia Pacific, Dhaka-Bangladesh
Cell: +88-017-55000013; e-mail:ishtiak.hrm@gmail.com

Khadiza Rahman Tanchi

Department of Business Administration, Daffodil International University, Dhaka-Bangladesh
Cell: +88-017-38773134; e-mail:tanchi26_rahman@yahoo.com

Md.Nahid Alam

Department of Business Administration, University of Asia Pacific, Dhaka-Bangladesh
Cell: +88-019-12562337; e-mail:nahid.9118@gmail.com

Abstract

Competency mapping is important and is an essential exercise. Every well managed firm should have well defined roles and list of competencies required to perform each role effectively. Such list should be used for recruitment, performance management, promotions, placements and training needs identification. In performing or carrying out work, it is essential that the required job skills first be articulated. This information not only helps to identify individuals who have the matching skills for doing the work but also the skills that will enhance the successful performance of the work. Yet often to perform well, it is not enough just to have these skills. It is also critical to complement the skills with the necessary knowledge and attitudes. The intent of this article is to trace the concept of competency mapping and it's impact on HR practices.

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 your 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 HRM initiatives. Indian organizations are also 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. Role of HRM becomes more important.

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.

Competency

Any underlying characteristic required performing a given task, activity, or role successfully can be considered as competency. Competency may take the following forms:

- Knowledge
- Attitude
- Skill

Other characteristic of an individual includes:

- Motives
- Values
- Traits
- Self Concept etc.

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 which were later expanded in to the following four:

- Technical or Functional Competencies (Knowledge, Attitudes, skills etc. associated with the technology or functional expertise required to perform the role);
- Managerial (knowledge, attitudes, skills etc. required to plan, organise, mobilize and utilise various resources);
- Human (knowledge, attitudes and skills required to motivate, utilise and develop human resources); and
- Conceptual (abilities to visualise the invisible, think at abstract levels and use the thinking to plan future business).

This is a convenience 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 labeled and promoted by some firms as competency dictionaries.

Competency Mapping

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.

Competency Mapping Techniques

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 your past performance in a key skill area that is critical to success in the position for which you are interviewing. The interview will be conducted face-to-face whenever possible.

Using the STAR Technique

In a behavioral interview, the interviewer will ask questions about your 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 your 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 **Situation** in which you were involved?
- What was the **Task** you needed to accomplish?
- What **Action(s)** did you take?

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.

Steps involved in Repertory grid:

- **Step 1**

The individual or group begins with a repertory grid, pen or pencil, and five to eight blank cards.

- **Step 2**

Then the elements are written across the top of the grid.

- **Step 3**

After this, the subject(s) write numbers on one side of the cards which correspond with the elements at the top of the grid.

- **Step 4**

The cards are turned face down, shuffled, and then three cards are drawn at random.

- **Step 5**

The subject(s) mark on the grid which three elements were drawn with an "X". They then decide: "Out of the three elements chosen, which two seem to have something more in common with each other?" These two elements are connected with a line.

- **Step 6**

Always on the left side of the grid, the subject(s) will describe what aspect these two elements share. On the right side, they will express what it is that makes the third element different from the other two. (If this is too difficult, people are allowed to write something they believe to be the opposite of the left hand construct).

- **Step 7**

Finally, the elements are rated to the constructs. Each element is rated to the constructs on a scale of one to five, with the left construct as "1" and the right construct as "5". For example, on a scale of 1 to 5, with "1" being most like a "lesson carefully designed for students needs" and five as "giving students second language activities just to kill the time", we see that the subject(s) rated the element, "students are happy" as more like the left construct, with a rating of "2", the element, "students are active" as like the right construct, with a rating of "5", "students retain L2" as like the left side with a rating of "1", and so on.

One the first row has been rated, the individual or group turn the three cards over, shuffle them, and begin the process all over again. They may reshuffle in the case of drawing the same three card combination as before.

Repertory grids were an invention of the late George Kelly, a mid-West American engineer turned psychologist/psychotherapist who wrote up his work in the '50s. They consist of a rectangular matrix of ratings of things called "elements" (usually placed in the columns) each rated on adjectival phrases or simple adjectives known as "constructs".

The following is an example, a grid from an (imaginary) forensic psychotherapy patient:

	"You to your mother"	"Your mother to you"	"You to your father"	"Your father to you"	"You to your partner"	"Your partner to you"	"You to your victim"	"Your victim to you"	"You to your therapist"	"Your therapist to you"
Domineering	2	3	4	4	5	4	2	4	5	6
Sexually attractive	2	2	3	3	6	4	5	4	4	2
Easily controlled	2	3	5	2	4	6	4	6	5	4
Rejecting	4	4	3	5	6	4	3	2	5	5
Loving	5	6	3	4	6	5	2	4	6	3
Neglecting	2	2	4	4	5	4	4	2	6	5
Sexually intimidating	2	5	3	6	6	3	2	4	2	2
Protective	1	5	1	1	5	5	1	3	2	1
Understanding	4	4	2	4	3	4	4	2	4	2

The elements here are directional relationships:

"Your therapist to you" i.e. the first element represents the way he thinks he is toward his mother, the second is how he thinks she is toward him.

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.

Key Features

- Selection methods cover the entire spectrum of job-relevant abilities, including reasoning and social skills, and are offered in a variety of formats:
 - Multiple-choice tests, either computer-based or paper and pencil
 - Structured interviews
 - Bio-data questionnaires
 - Job-knowledge tests
 - Social skills inventories
 - Executive assessment centers
 - Language-learning ability tests
 - Physical performance tests
 - Professional examinations for managers and executives
- Complete documentation of development process and validity analysis.
- Nationwide network of test administrators can effectively and efficiently administer tests of OPM design.

Reasons to use these services

- **Increased productivity**
- **Enhanced diversity of candidates**

Assessment Center Exercises

An Assessment Center can be defined as "a variety of testing techniques designed to allow candidates to demonstrate, under standardized conditions, the skills and abilities that are most essential for success in a

given job" (Coleman, 1987). The term "assessment center" is really a catch-all term that can consist of some or all of a variety of exercises. Assessment centers usually have some sort of in-basket exercise which contains contents similar to those which are found in the in-basket for the job which is being tested. Other possibilities include oral exercises, counseling simulations, problem analysis exercises, interview simulations, role play exercises, written report/analysis exercises, and leaderless group exercises (Coleman, 1987; Filer, 1979; Joiner, 1984). Assessment centers allow candidates to demonstrate more of their skills through a number of job relevant situations (Joiner, 1984).

360 Degree Feedback

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 are sometimes called "360-degree review."

Implementation of Competency Mapping Technique

Identify the positions to be studied: The first step in competency mapping is to identify the job positions to be studied and while doing competency mapping we need to keep in mind that it is done for job positions and not for persons holding job position.

Job analysis: The next step is to conduct the job analysis of the selected job position through observation, questionnaire, interview method, diary method, log record, critical incident method or with the help of panel of experts.

Prepare job description and job specification to identify the KRA's and KPA's: Based on the information taken through the job analysis, prepare competency based job description and job specification and also identify the KRA's and KPA's for each job position.

Identify the required competencies: Based on identifying the KRA's and the KPA's for each job position identify 6-7 most crucial competencies required to do a job.

Preparing a competency dictionary: Once the competencies are identified the next step is to prepare a competency dictionary. For this, the competency has to be defined first and then using the behaviorally

anchored rating scales the competencies need to be classified into 3-level or 5-level rating scale.

Preparing a competency matrix: Once the dictionary is prepared and the classification is done for each competency the next step is to prepare competency matrix clearly showing the level of competency required for each job position against each competency. The level required for each job position may be decided either by a brainstorming session with the HR and the management or through 360 degree feedback depending upon the suitability of the organization.

Measuring the gaps: Once the matrix is designed the next step is to check the deviation between the required level of competency and the actual level of competency possessed by the employee holding a particular job position. The ratings may be given either by the brainstorming session or through 360 degree feedback depending upon the suitability of organisation.

Thus, these are the steps of competency mapping process and once the gaps are found in the performance training can be given to employees to fill the gap; it can be used for performance appraisal. Competency mapping can also be used for coaching and succession planning, and finally if HR knows exactly the right kind of skills for a particular job position it can acquire as well as make just the right kind of talent.

Conclusion

Competency mapping can ultimately serve the individual who decides to seek employment in an environment where he or she perhaps can learn new things and be more intellectually challenged. Basically, it is not only done for Confirmed employees of an organization and it can also be done for contract workers or for those seeking employment to emphasize the specific skills which would make them valuable to a potential employer.

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