Identifying Human Capital Needs

"We are not here to mark time, but to make progress, to achieve results and to leave a record of excellence."

President George W. Bush

"Motivated, talented employees are key to the success of the strategic management of human capital."

Kay Coles James
Director
Office of Personnel Management

Symposium Overview

- Presentation 1 – *Staying Current: The Diagnostic Testing of Technical Competencies*

- Presentation 2 – *A Competency-Based Needs Analysis of a Federal Agency's IT Workforce: Using Web-Based Assessments to Identify Competency Gaps*

- Presentation 3 – *Using Competency Assessment to Identify High-Potential Leaders for the General Services Administration (GSA)*

Diagnostic Testing of Technical Competencies Background

- Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Restructuring and Reform Act of 1998

- In 2001, IRS implemented modernized structure and management plan

- New IRS structure built around similar taxpayer segments

  ➢ Wage and Investment

  ➢ Small Business and Self-Employed

  ➢ Tax Exempt and Government Entities

  ➢ Large and Mid-Size Business

Field Assistance Concept

- Field Assistance is within Wage and Investment Division

- Provides face-to-face customer service for taxpayers with wage and investment income only

- Developed single point of contact approach

- Created Taxpayer Assistance Centers ("walk-in" sites)

- Staffed with new position – Tax Resolution Representative (TRR)

The On-Going Human Capital Challenge

- Tax Resolution Representatives (TRRs) provide one-stop-service to taxpayers

- TRRs must maintain proficiency on a wide array of complex issues

- IRS lacked a formal mechanism to identify individual strengths and weaknesses

- Providing refresher training to each employee on each content area would waste valuable training resources

Solution: Training Assessment Battery

- Assesses gaps between required and current knowledge

- Targets and quantifies specific developmental needs

- Avoids staggering costs of unnecessary training

- Contains modules for specific competency areas

- Links diagnostic test results to delivery of targeted training

- Provides separate Training Assessment Battery (TAB) for managers (M-TAB) and employees (E-TAB)

Item Pool Development – Managers

- Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) developed test specifications derived from job analysis

- Manager SMEs reviewed existing material and wrote additional test items to fill out test plan

- Second SME panel reviewed item pool and developed additional items

- Manager SMEs began preliminary work on E-TAB specifications

- Consensus across both manager SME panels was that a single TAB would be appropriate for employees *and* managers

Item Pool Development – Employees

- Employee SME panel not informed of managerial panel results

- SME panel reviewed test specifications and item bank

- Employee SMEs independently concluded that a single TAB would be appropriate for managers and employees

- Consensus: Managers and employees are expected to maintain the same level of technical proficiency

- Employee SME panel also wrote additional items

Content Validation Study

- 15 Subject Matter Experts (7 managers and 8 employees) participated in the validation study

- Five phases of study

  ➢ Answer each test item

  ➢ Classify each item by content area and sub-area

  ➢ Rate quality of item as a measure of the intended competency

  ➢ Estimate item difficulty

  ➢ Provide comments on item clarity, technical accuracy, quality of response options, etc.

Selecting Test Items

- Goal: Select the very best items from each sub-area for inclusion in the TAB

- Item selection criteria (in order of importance):

  ➢ Relevance of item to test plan content area

  ➢ Average item quality rating

  ➢ Agreement concerning keyed response

  ➢ Average item difficulty (balance of easy, medium, and hard)

- Separate SME panel reviewed item statistics and made final item selections

Final Comments

- Linking assessment to developmental needs

- Diagnostic versus selection test development

- Measuring different types/levels of knowledge

- Multiple-choice format: efficient, economical, and objective

- Importance of the organizational culture and working environment

Identifying Competency Gaps
Background

- Large Federal Government agency

- Most critical technical competencies for Information Technology (IT) workforce

- Maintenance/enhancement of workforce skill-base

- Greater organizational flexibility

Process

- Conducted panel of fourteen subject matter experts from across IT specialty areas

- Linked agency knowledge, skills, and abilities to IT competencies

- Rated IT technical competencies on criticality

- Defined minimum level of proficiency required of any employee

- Linked most critical technical competencies to online IT assessments

- Reviewed assessment information, assessment scoring protocols, and minimum level of proficiency needed to establish minimum score

- Administered assessments

Results

- 252 of 330 employees participated (76%)

- 972 out of possible 1320 assessments administered (74%)

- Agency gap in 1 of 4 measured competencies

- Sectional and/or Office deficiencies in 2 of remaining 3 competencies

Summary

- Successes:

  - Identification of most critical competencies

  - Objective assessment of proficiency

  - Targeted training and development

  - Enhanced organizational skill-base and flexibility

  - Ability for follow-up assessment

- Areas for improvement:

  - Greater participation

  - Enhanced coverage of competencies by assessments

  - Examination within career levels and/or specialty areas

Assessment to Identify High-Potential Leaders
Background

- Early 2001, demographic studies showed that more than half of the executives in the federal government would be eligible to retire within 5 years

- Public Buildings Services (PBS) of the General Services Administration decided to undertake an aggressive program to develop the next cohort of leaders for their agency

- OPM worked with PBS to identify high-potential individuals for an accelerated leadership development program

Identifying Core Leadership Competencies for PBS (2001)

- OPM psychologists conducted focus groups for three levels of management at PBS. Groups conducted at headquarters and field locations.

- OPM's 27 leadership competencies (which aggregate into the Five Executive Core Qualifications) were used as the starting point for the focus groups discussions.

- Criterion: Importance in foreseeable future (i.e., 3 years).

- Focus group results and executive input used to narrow list to 14 core leadership competencies.

Design of Selection System to Identify High Potential Leaders

- Three part competency assessment process developed by OPM: (1) Accomplishment Record, (2) Assessment Center, and (3) Executive Panel Interview.

- Accomplishment Record and Executive Panel interview assessed past behavior of candidates. GSA senior-level leaders trained on how to assess candidates.

- Assessment Center was provided by Third Party Vendor. Placed candidates in demanding situations to assess current ability to perform competencies at a high level.

- Process designed to select on the basis of individual merit and to place all candidates on an even-playing field.

Lessons Learned

- Involve key stakeholders throughout the process

- Focus on procedural fairness

- Use multiple methods to evaluate candidates

- Avoid "clinical" judgment in deciding who gets in

- Involve third-party experts (e.g., OPM's Assessment and Training Assistance Group)

- Evaluate program annually and make adjustments

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