WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

BUILDING UPON EXISTING STAFF CAPACITY BY QUANTIFYING JOB TASKS

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Driving Better Outcomes

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THE CHALLENGE

There's no argument - staff always deserve our best tools, training, leadership, coaching, guidance, and support to empower their repeatable, accurate and compliant performances on the job.

But, how can we know if the support staff receives is, indeed, fitting? Can we recognize when their job requirements have evolved/devolved over time? What steps can we take to pinpoint real-world requirements and match them with individual staff capacities? How do we ensure that the training staff receives actually enhances the knowledge, skills, and attitudinal requirements of their role? How do we identify new competencies that may be required in the future?

These, and similar challenges, are not atypical, especially on active programs. Sound daunting? No worries, the resolution can be quite simple.

ONE SOLUTION

One technique we can employ to tackle these queries is through the use of a Job Task Analysis/Validation (JTA/V). Relatively straight forward, this management process aims to (re)clarify the links between real-world job requirements, predictable and measureable staff performances and outputs, and the hierarchy of need (criticality). Ultimately, a JTA/V can help managers recalibrate the tools, training, coaching, guidance, and support provided to staff with authentic program requirements.

THE JTA/V

Let's face it; staff roles can change over time. Simply put, a JTA/V offers managers a means to document role-specific tasks and the staff competencies required of each, to rank each task in terms of relative criticality to the role and performance frequency, while providing a standard to measure staff performances by. JTA/V findings are regularly used to clarify new training needs, update position descriptions and grade classifications, and inform other personnel actions, such as promotions and performance appraisals. Sure, it all sounds fancy and tech-y, but truthfully, the JTA/V does not need to be a complex undertaking. Let's take a look.

Figure 1: The *Job Task Analysis/Validation: Recaliberating and rating the Role against citicallity, frequency, and performance.*

In collaboration with her HQ and field staff, the Chief of Party launched a JTA/V effort to answer the following questions;

1. What job tasks are considered most important, of average importance, and of least importance to the requirements of the position?
2. What job tasks are performed most frequently, at an average frequency, and at the least frequency – and why?
3. What job tasks are the position holders most prepared to perform, considered to have an average ability to perform, and considered to be least able to perform – and why?
4. Which job tasks are no longer considered applicable and therefore not performed?
5. Which job tasks require new training, refresher training, or advanced training?
6. Do additional job tasks exist that have not yet been considered or assigned?
7. How do these findings compare across each assigned geographic area?

VALUE	SCALE ITEM	DESCRIPTION
5	Extremely Well Prepared	Staff can perform the task and require no support
4	Very Well Prepared	Staff requires only occassional support
3	Moderately Well Prepared	Staff requires minimal but regular support
2	Not Well Prepared	Staff requires significant, regular support to perform the task
N/A	N/A	The job taks is typically learned through on-the-job training or is not performed by the agents they supervise

Table 2: *Rating Chart*

In very short order, a variety of data collection techniques were employed to elicit stakeholder responses, to include;
1. Nameless surveys distributed both to supervisory and field job holders
2. A comprehensive review of historic training documentation and performance metrics
3. Interviews with subject/context matter experts (SMEs)
4. Consultation with key stakeholders with specific knowledge of the job (including client representatives)

PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS	MY PREPAREDNESS TO PERFORM THIS TASK					THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS TASK TO MY ROLE				
STAFF CAN	4	3	2	1	N	4	3	2	1	N
a. Clearly explain to interviewees the purpose of XXX and the role of a XXX	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Coordinate with my supervisor routinely so they can monitor my progress and issue my assignments	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Complete all XX assignments on time while using the appropriate tools and practices	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Collect and report XXX data in accordance with XXX procedures	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e. Capture geo-tagged and time-stamped media from site and event	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f. Identify and report any data capture or reporting probles to the supervisor	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Table 3: *Expectations Chart*

OUTCOMES

Within weeks, the products of these inquiries were collated and evaluated. In cooperation with these same stakeholders, decisions were made to revise the training curriculum for field staff, to establish updated job tasks, conditions and standards, to streamline the logistical support chain, and to restructure all work stream policies and procedures. The resulting impacts on the program were significant. Roles were re-clarified and staff, once again, were empowered to perform at their very best.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Often, the need to conduct a JTA/V stems from a policy or program shift, degraded staff performance metrics, or a simply a filled, "Complaints Box." It's not unusual for a program to undertake these steps in instances of management changes (i.e.: a new CoP or other managers join the program). As a management tool, the JTA/V can help reset expectations while ensuring team mates are supplied with the best tools, training, leadership, coaching, guidance, and support.