Competency Based Training Need Assessment for IT Companies in Chennai

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Abstract: Competency assessment is an important activity that involves identification of the desired skills set for each role for meeting organizational goals and objectives. Competency models enable employees to know where they stand, which is then followed by acquisition of competencies through training and development or through employees' self-initiated efforts. This can enable training need assessment in more accurate terms and plan training activity in a manner that leaves little mismatch between training needed and training provided. Competency based training need assessment provides key inputs to the training department to harness their full potential enshrined in their Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs). This research reports a case study relating to competency based training need assessment for general and technical skills for middle level executives working in a IT companies at Chennai.

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1. Introduction

These days most organizations operate in a business environment where uncertainty, risk and complexity in the external environment are a prevailing norm. Pressures of international competition and market globalization constrain Indian companies to match global standards of performance and corporate governance. Whatever their structure or business strategy, organizations are realizing that it is the performance of their human capital that can make a cutting edge. With growing emphasis on technology, productivity and quality standards, organizations need more competent and self-directed teams to suit changing work needs. More than consistency it is innovation and constant improvement that hold the key. This requires employees to learn new skills and competencies, adhered to values, behave professionally and enhance risk taking capabilities, all of which represent a set of competencies that can be cultivated through training and development. Competencies are a set of observable behaviour. Competency based approaches owe their evolution, among others, to David McCelland who is regarded as a pioneer in competency based models. A competency model approach is identification of competencies needed to perform organizational activities including assessment of competencies available. A competency model is essentially identification of gap between available and needed competencies and then taking necessary steps for reducing this gap. Thus,

competency models can be particularly appropriate in employee selection (matching competencies of individuals with those required for a job), performance appraisal (identifying attainment of proficiency levels vis-à-vis specified competency), training and development (identifying and competencies that need to be improved through training and development). The subject of competency mapping has acquired added significance as a performance management tool (Sanghi, 2004).

Based on a study carried out during nineties at three leading performance management driven companies it was found that companies using competency based training and development achieve higher shareholder value (Menon, 2004). For taking stock of the state-of-art of training identification strategies in organizations, a study was undertaken in 1986 in US by the Opinion Research Corporation and supported by the American Society for Training and Development. This study, among others, found out that although identification of training needs should normally precede any training initiative but in reality it was seldom followed.

In India, among several such initiatives a study on training needs identification was carried out through a questionnaire based survey for senior middle and junior level executives in 75 odd public and private enterprises involving a large cross-section of Indian industry (Pattanayak, 1997).

As per the study findings majority of respondents favoured identification of training needs

as essential prerequisite for drawing a training calendar. As for the method of training need identification generally followed, as per the survey findings, personal interviews are most widely adopted option (83 per cent), direct interfacing with the workplace (80 per cent), evaluation of performance / productivity measures (75 per cent), questionnaire survey (66 per cent), and organisation analysis (64 per cent). As per the study findings, among different methods of training need assessment such as direct observation, interviews, surveys, group discussions, etc., 'questionnaire based survey' is by far most commonly followed technique (Sah, 1991).

2. Research Methodology

In this study identification of competency based training need assessment was carried out with the help of a questionnaire based survey. It aimed to analyze training needs for both managerial and technical training. This survey was, however, limited to training need assessment of middle management executives only that included deputy managers and managers. A training need assessment is considered important as it leads to the engagement of organizational resources more appropriately with maximum benefits otherwise time invested on training activity may not yield desired results. For carrying out competency mapping exercise for training need assessment a questionnaire involving 5point scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' was used.

Responses received from this survey were divided into three groups, namely, (i) individuals needing no training, (ii) individuals needing moderate training inputs but not on essential basis (optional) and (iii) individuals at the bottom line who need extensive and diverse training inputs. Individuals falling in the second category were primarily those whose training needs were 'desirable' but not 'essential' and could be even deferred and viewed as 'optional'. However, for technical skills category, training needs were divided into two groups only, i.e., (i) individuals who need no training, and (ii) individuals who require considerable training inputs.

After dividing training assessments into three groups for general skills as 'training not needed', 'training preferably needed (optional)' and 'training essentially needed' and for technical training in two groups as 'training not needed' and 'training needed'. Training schedule / calendar was developed in three phases for general and technical training in accordance with the suggested prioritization criterion on the basis of number of respondents opting for a particular skills set / competence (Table 4). Phase I included identification of a set of competency comprising 'driving business acumen', 'driving cost leadership', 'planning for results', 'taking ownership', 'communicating effectively', 'delegation', 'building a competent team', and 'process oriented problem solving'. Phase II covered 'computer skills', 'presentation skills', 'decisionmaking skills', 'coaching and training skills', 'driving innovation', and 'managing performance'. Phase III included development of 'interpersonal effectiveness', 'customer centric behaviour', and 'passion for quality' (Table 4).

3. Analysis and Results

In this study identification of training needs for both general and technical skills categories are prioritized into three different phases. Number of preferences for specific training needed was taken as a basis for prioritizing training programmes. Competency based training needs of respondents were analyzed based on estimation of mean and standard deviation given in the decision table (Table 1).

Break-up of number of responses received for each competency (general skill) falling under three categories i.e., 'training not needed', 'training needed but optional' and 'training compulsorily needed' are given in Table 2. Break-up of the number of respondents who have opted for 'training needed' and 'training not needed' for each competency (technical skill) is summarized in Table 3. Training needs identified from the above analysis were then ranked to determine which training needs were more important and to be addressed immediately for imparting.

Programmes for general skills were included in Phase I if responses received for training on 'compulsory basis' and 'optional basis' exceeded 30. Programmes were included in Phase II when responses received for training on 'essential basis' and 'optional basis' were less than 30; or when there were no responses for training on 'optional basis' and responses received for training on 'compulsory basis' were less than 5. All such programmes which did not form part of Phase I and II were included in Phase III. For technical skills if number of responses for specific training programmes were more than 40 then such programmes were included in Phase I. On the other hand, if responses for different programmes (technical skills) were more than 20 but less than 40 then these were included in Phase II (Table 4 and 5).

Correct atom or	Maaa	S D	Danas	Category		
Competency	Mean	50	Kange	1	2	3
Taking ownership	2.64	1.439	1.201-4.079	1	2-4	>4
Interpersonal effectiveness	1.40	1.485	-0.085-2.885	0	1-3	>3
Communicating effectively	5.10	1.909	3.191-7.009	3	4-7	>7
Presentation skills	3.08	1.536	1.544-4.615	1	2-5	>5
Driving innovation	3.18	0.896	2.28-4.07	2	3,4	>4
Customer centric behaviour	2.78	1.130	1.65-3.91	2	3,4	>4
Displaying business acumen	1.62	1.193	0.427-2.813	0	1-3	>3
Demonstrating passion for quality	3.40	1.400	2-4.8	2	3-5	>5
Driving cost leadership	3.88	1.409	2.471-5.28	2	3-5	>5
Planning for results	2.70	1.418	1.282-4.118	1	2-4	>4
Process oriented problem solving	1.78	1.447	0.330-3.227	0	1-3	>3
Decision making	3.74	1.850	1.890-5.59	2	3-6	>6
Building a competent team	2.84	2.198	0.642-5.03	0	1-5	>5
Managing performance	1.22	1.234	0-2.45	0	1-2	>2
Delegating	1.94	1.449	0.491-2.3	0	1-3	>3
Computer skills	3.62	0.780	2.840-4.4	3	4	>4
Coaching/Training ability	2.52	1.199	1.321-3.719	1	2-4	>4

Table 1: Decision Criteria for Identification of General Skills

Note: 1 Training Not Needed; 2: Training Needed (optional) 3: Training Compulsorily Needed.

Table 2: Identification of General Skill Requirement (Training Needs Assessment)

		Training Not Needed	Training Needed Training Needed Compulsorily				·ily
S.No.	Competency (KSA)	No. of persons	Per cent	No. of persons	Percent	No. of persons	Per cent
1.	Taking ownership	13	26	31	62	6	12
2.	Interpersonal effectiveness	18	36	29	58	3	6
3.	Communication skills	9	18	35	70	6	12
4.	Presentation skills	6	12	42	84	2	4
5.	Driving innovation	6	12	41	82	3	6
6.	Customer centric behaviour	22	44	25	50	3	6
7.	Business acumen	3	6	42	84	5	10
8.	Passion for quality	17	34	29	58	4	8
9.	Cost leadership	4	8	40	80	6	12
10.	Planning skills	9	18	35	70	6	12
11.	Problem solving	11	22	34	68	5	10
12.	Decision making	15	30	31	62	4	8
13.	Building a competent	3	6	37	74	10	20
14.	Managing performance	17	34	26	52	7	14
15.	Delegating	3	6	38	76	9	18
16.	Computer skills	21	42	23	46	6	12
17.	Coaching/training ability	8	32	41	46	1	22

Table 3: Identification of Technical Skill Requirement (Training Needs Assessment)

S.No	Compotency (VSA)	Training Nee	ded	Training Not Needed		
•	Competency (KSA)	No. of Persons	%	No. of Persons	%	
1	Continuous improvement methods	46	92	4	8	
2	Knowledge of company products	41	82	9	18	
3	Understanding other products	46	92	4	8	
4	New methods available in maintaining Quality work	47	94	3	6	
5	Knowledge about the current trend/technique Used globally.	46	92	4	8	
6	Creative approach	36	72	14	28	
7	Knowledge about various new Tools and software's designing	10	20	40	80	
8	Various modern manufacturing processes	14	28	36	72	
9	Vendor management techniques	14	28	36	72	
10	Inventory management techniques.	22	44	28	56	

Table 4. Phasewise Number of Programmes for Competency Upgradation and participants Planned / Prioritized for Training (General Skills)

Phase	S.No.	Competency	No. of Person	No. of Programmes
Ι	1	Driving business acumen	47	3
	2	Driving cost leadership	46	3
	3	Planning for results	41	3
	4	Taking ownership	37	2
	5	Communicating effectively	41	3
	6	Delegation	47	3
	7	Building a competent team	47	3
	8	Process oriented problem solving	39	2
II	1	Computer skills	29	2
	2	Presentation skills	44	3
	3	Decision making skill	35	2
	4	Coaching and training ability	42	3
	5	Driving innovation	44	3
	6	Managing performance	33	2
III	1	Interpersonal effectiveness	32	2
	2	Customer centric behaviour	28	2
	3	Developing passion for quality	33	2

 Table 5. Phasewise Number of Programmes for Competency Upgradation and Participants

 Planned/Prioritized for Training (Technical Skills)

Phase	S.No.	Competency	No. of Person	No. of Programmes
Ι	1	Continuous improvement techniques	46	3
	2	Understanding other products	46	3
	3	New methods in quality maintenance	3	
	4	Current trends and techniques used globally	46	3
II	1	Knowledge of products	40	2
	2	Creative approach for problem solving	36	2
	3	Inventory management techniques	22	2
III	1	Designing tools and techniques	10	1
	2	Modern manufacturing techniques	14	1
	3	Vendor management techniques	14	1

4. Concluding Recommendation

In this study competency based training analysis was carried out in respect of middle management personnel of deputy manager / manager levels in IT companies. Training needs identified was shortlisted and prioritized in three phases depending on number of responses received for each category. Based on this prioritization training calendar was developed for fulfilling the competency development objectives. This calendar was developed in a manner that it did not affect normal work schedule of the concerned employees. As in many similar studies sample size was more representative rather than comprehensive due to practical constraints. While the study was limited to middle level executives only, but in the same way it can be extended to other grades of employees as well besides deputy managers and managers.

Competency models may prove helpful in aligning individual performance with organizational goals and in the process achieving competitive advantage. The value addition by a competency-based approach depends on a number of factors: (i) extent to which the competency study is based on the strategic needs of the organization; (ii) clarity with which the role or job is defined in relation to the strategy; (iii) rigour of the process used in defining the competencies; and the accuracy in matching individuals vis-à-vis job needs. Implementation of competency model may however invite resistance from certain quarters as sometime it may be in conflict with traditional 'mindsets' and remedial measures may become necessary to overcome 'mental roadblocks'.

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