



TenStep Supplemental Paper

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Bringing Skills to Life

Today, there's no shortage of management ideas about how HR can better manage employees. Nonetheless, organizations that develop an inventory of skills and competencies and manage them effectively usually enjoy a distinct advantage.

At General Electric (GE), which has about 313,000 employees worldwide, competency management is a powerful tool for identifying employee and training needs. In 1995, it adopted a Six Sigma program to improve performance across the company.

GE developed a formal competency-analysis program based on 45 different behaviors deemed essential to organizational success, including clear business thinking, the ability to manage change, and good interpersonal relationships. It then offered a curriculum and training based on the needs of both employees and the organization. At that point, hiring managers and trainers focused on the specific behaviors required for a particular competency model. Ultimately, the program helped the organization use resources more effectively and gain a competitive edge in the marketplace.

Handling employees' knowledge and skills:

Identify key skills and competencies through surveys, interviews, focus groups, and analysis. Every organization has unique needs, and identifying the skills and competencies that drive success can boost performance and profits.

Build a management system that can track employee performance. An organization can track where employees are and where they ought to be using a checklist, spreadsheet, or specialized software applications. It's also possible to share this information with employees, so that they can prepare for new assignments or better positions within the organization.

Integrate skills and competency inventories with other HR systems, including recruiting, training, and succession planning. A list of key skills can define questions that a recruiter asks an applicant during an interview or the types of courses an organization introduces through its training and development programs.

Remember that skills or competency tracking is not a one-time solution; it is an ongoing process. It's essential to pull systems and update the list of skills required periodically. This can also lead to changes in the types of courses an organization offers and the kinds of employees an enterprise recruits.

Don't expect immediate miracles. Filling the employee skill and competency gaps takes time, effort, and cultural adjustment. It's up to HR to not only devise the systems but also educate employees about the benefits of using them for self-appraisal, career development, and other processes.