



## **Job Analysis: A methodical approach to the collection, organization, and interpretation of data** **Gail Schaper-Gordon, Ph.D.**

*There has been a paradigm shift in how today's businesses need to think about and conceptualize jobs—jobs need to be thought of more as roles than as some static, circumscribed, isolated set of tasks. Having a clear understanding of jobs is invaluable to such Human Resources strategies as pre-employment selection, performance evaluation design, competency modeling, derailment coaching, succession planning and development, teambuilding, and so forth.*

### **Job Analysis: A Definition**

Job analysis involves the detailed collection, organization, and interpretation of key information on what people do in a particular role, what constitutes success in that role, and what's required to get from one particular position to another. The analytic method requires a clarification of both the quality and variety of the tasks, responsibilities, and key result outputs; it evaluates the level of educational experience, training, skill, complexity, authority, and responsibility inherent in the job; and it documents reporting relationships, key personal and motivational characteristics and stylistic requirements (a.k.a. emotional intelligence), cultural fit issues, and working conditions.

### **Data Gathering Methods**

The job dimensions cited above can be delineated by gathering data either from primary information sources or secondary ones.

#### ***Primary Sources***

- Direct observation of job incumbents performing their work
- Interviews of these incumbents regarding the ins and outs of their work/role/job
- Job-related questionnaires
- Employment requisitions
- Procedure manuals and work plans
- Supervisors of the job
- Job performance requirements

### *Secondary Sources*

- Pre-existing job descriptions
- Pay surveys
- Dictionary of Occupational Titles
- Want ads

## **Structuring the Information**

Most every HR consulting firm attempts to place its own special stamp on its job analysis methodology. Conceptually, though, all of the models can be boiled down to a simple three-factor model that underlies both the job analysis process and its output, the job description:

- **WHAT?** (job content)
- **HOW?** (experience and competencies required)
- **TO WHAT END?** (accountability and results)

If you can answer these basic questions about a job or a given job class or job family, then you understand it. The key is to have an efficient tool with which to conduct job analyses and from which to build job descriptions.

## **Job Analysis Questionnaire**

A streamlined way to collect lots of first-hand information is with a questionnaire that can collect all the necessary job-related information from incumbents and from those who manage a particular job. The basic components of the questionnaire we use are:

- Basic Demographic Description: Title, Department, Location, Reports To, etc.

### *Part I: Description of Position*

- Purpose of Position: Brief description of the main function of the position.
- Organizational chart with the supervisor, peers and the direct reports of the position.
- Activities and Results: In order of importance, a brief description of all of the **major** activities and the **results** they are trying to obtain for each job, as well as the amount of hours per week normally spend performing each activity.
- Measuring Results: For each activity, brief description of how the results can be measured.

- **Skills, Knowledge and Physical Abilities Necessary to Obtain Results:** For each activity, a brief description of the above.
- **Contacts Within the Organization:** A list of all individuals, by title, specifying frequency and reason(s) for each contact.
- **Contacts Outside the Organization:** A list of all individuals, by title and organization, specifying frequency, reason and applicable numerical or monetary data.
- **Problem Solving:** Description of the typical problems the position handles or solves.
- **Decision Making:** List typical situations and decisions the position is expected to handle. List the same for those normally referred to supervisor or other person for guidance.
- **Planning:** Description of planning required for job.
- **Working Conditions:** Description of conditions that affect normal comfort and well-being on the job.
- **Physical Effort:** Description of physical exertion required by the position.

### ***Part II: Additional Information***

Any additional information or explanations that would be helpful in developing an accurate description of the job.

### ***Part III: Manager's Comments***

The manager thoroughly reviews the employees' responses, completes the following information, and discusses the questionnaire with employees to obtain a mutual understanding of the position.

- **Job Content and Advice:** Description where the supervisor assists the employee
- **Decision Making Authority:** List of activities requiring supervisor approval for the employee
- **Skills/Knowledge/Experience:** Description of these types of factors required to successfully perform the job
- **Additional Comments:** Information for additional insight

## **Job Description**

The job description can be built with the information gathered by the *Job Analysis Questionnaire* and information from other data gathering methods mentioned earlier. The goal is to develop a more strategic understanding of the given position, why it is important, and how it contributes value to the greater enterprise. A comprehensive position description that meets these requirements can be the foundation for most other HR functions.