

## Maximize Your Human Capital



By Stephen Maloney

A FRIEND OF mine, who is president of an energy management company, was set to hire a recent university grad, but then he became concerned. Some of the applicant's competency test scores revealed lower than average results. He began to have serious worries about job fit and second thoughts about making the offer to this person. I asked him how he knew the position needed high scores in those competency areas. He didn't have an answer and went on contemplating his decision for a few more days.

My friend is not alone with this dilemma; hundreds of senior executives are searching for ideas to maximize their human capital every day. In a recently conducted

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survey published in *Canadian Business*, 82 per cent of senior executives admitted to a direct link between corporate success and employee culture, and most considered corporate culture their primary motivation for financial success. With numbers like these, the subject of employee fit deserves further review.

Executives now require their HR departments to produce tangible goals that have positive effects on the bottom line—goals that can be measured and tracked showing reductions in turnover, time to hire, cost per hire and time to productivity, while showing increases in things like tenure, productivity, employee satisfaction and levels of customer service. These are lofty aims, so how do organizations achieve the best employee performance? One way is to line up the skills and attributes employees have with those required by each position within the company.

Here are five steps that will help your company achieve effective organizational development through job alignment:

1. **Appoint a group of subject-matter experts.** This group of people is generally comprised of representatives from the management team that the position reports to, star employees who are currently doing

the same job, representatives from HR and any other people who have a vested interest in the position.

2. **Define job descriptions.** This is not as easy a task as it seems but should be thoughtfully produced just as long as you've followed Step 1 and have the right people at the table.
  3. **Define three to five key accountabilities.** Not only does the group have to define and list the key accountabilities, but it also has to prioritize and allocate time schedules to each of them. The committee should remember that a minimum of 20 per cent of the week should be left unscheduled as the employee will need time to take care of unforeseen circumstances. These key accountabilities will also be paramount to the task of defining which core competencies, personal skills, motivators and behaviours are needed for optimal performance by the job.
  4. **Conduct a panel review.** Now that the group of subject matter experts has set the parameters for the job, it needs to review the top 13 characteristics that will come out of this process. Don't be surprised if the competencies of self-management and personal accountability are blinking in bright red lights and come up in your benchmarks. CEO's love their employees to have high scores in these areas as it serves as an accurate barometer for good things to come.
  5. **Measure your employees and future hires.** Your organization has gone through the painstaking exercise of producing job benchmarks, so you might as well enjoy the fruits of your efforts and align your people with your jobs accordingly.
- Organizations that don't go through this process open themselves up to the negative results of poor employee alignment. The consequences are far reaching: loss of goodwill with clients, company culture problems and, even worse, the cost of lost opportunity. So which is it? The chicken before the egg—or, for our purposes, jobs for people or people for jobs? As one senior executive from the mining industry so aptly put it, "job requires technical skills" is just the price of entry to apply for the job. Progressive organizations know that the answer to our question is most definitely people for jobs. 

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