

## How to execute a staff capacity exercise

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Employees are no doubt the lifeblood of any company. You have some human resources managers going over and above to poach the top talent in other organisations. After all, organisational performance cascades from individual performance to feed into the group results. When incompetence goes unnoticed, your business is at risk of underperformance. The question then is, do your employees have the necessary skills and competencies needed to support your strategy and take the organisation to new heights?

Employee competencies are a list of skills and behaviours that are specific and well defined and are used to layout an organization's performance expectations for a job or the organization's culture as a whole. Competencies are a way to address both the technical skills of a job and the more difficult-to-define behavioural expectations of a job. These behavioural expectations, which also include social skills, are also an important factor in the overall growth and potential within the company.

An organisation might fill every position as per the organogram but still find have gaps in terms of what is needed to take the organisation forward. There is, therefore, the need to ensure that you not only have the right numbers and headcount. Your workforce should also complement your organisation with adequate skills, qualifications, competencies and experience to guarantee your organisation's success.

Fortunately, the capacity of your workforce can be scientifically measured to diagnose the existing levels of skill and competencies versus what is needed in the organisation. This is comprehensively known as a staff capacity assessment. A staff capacity assessment is a three-pronged exercise with the intent to identify the skills gap within an organisation, align staffs skill set with your organizational objectives and offer practical solutions on how to develop your staff in line with the stated objectives. Most people would be tempted to judge staff capacity just by the qualifications of the incumbent but skills on paper match don't necessarily indicate capability. Adequate staff capacity assessments rather look at the process holistically including cognitive profiling tests.

100 years of research on employee performance repeatedly shows that the best predictor of job performance is the general mental ability. This is a good starting point in determining the capacity of your staff. General mental ability is a term used to describe the level at which an individual learns, understands instructions, and solves problems. This can be assessed through properly validated psychometric tests administered by a registered psychologist.

The psychometric testing aspects of the exercise also includes critical thinking appraisal- testing the ability to consider a range of information derived from many different sources. The battery of tests also includes personality profiling. Personality does matter in that some jobs are inherently client-facing and require more extroverted individuals. Personality tests determine the extent to which a person will have an appropriate work approach and strong/constructive relationships with work colleagues.

Next in the determination of staff capacity is the experience and qualifications analysis. A qualification and experience health analysis is a systematic approach whereby every individual's educational, professional qualifications and relevant experience are evaluated against those required for the current role. The purpose of qualifications and experience health analysis is to identify gaps in job knowledge among staff members.

When we take into account all these factors, we can then determine an individual's capacity that is; their performance and potential. The metric to be used to sum the results of all these tests is referred to as the Current actual capacity. Current actual capacity is an indicator of whether or not an individual is qualified and possess the adequate general mental ability, qualification and critical thinking required to adequately meet and exceed the demands of their current positions.

It is important to remember that when conducting a staff capacity assessment, you are considering the skills across your business, rather than just looking at individual staff. The point of the exercise is not to shame employees into what they can or cannot do but building a way forward for the organisation.

The final stage if a comprehensive staff capacity assessment exercise would be to make training and development plans where gaps have been identified. The temptation can be to hire new employees who speak more to the new direction of the organisation but this should not necessarily be the first option. The hiring process is not only pricey but there is also the risk of hiring a bad fit. A simpler solution to capacity gaps would be to invest in upskilling your workforce. means the increase in job-specific knowledge that might have been previously lacking.

Development plans are not only limited to technical skills that increase job-specific knowledge. Some individuals from your current workforce may have the capacity to take on additional responsibility with more training. This will then require targeted leadership courses to the specific individuals to cater to any supervisory deficits.

In summary, a staff capacity assessment exercise is there to ensure that the employee body is suited to the direction that the organisation is going. If that is not the case, action plans need to be made on how workers can be upskilled to gain the competence and skills required for the organisation to meet its strategic goals.

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