AN ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF EMPLOYEES IN ORGANIZATION

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Abstract
The main goal of the Project was to assess the competences of key employees in our company and to introduce the assessment methodology into human resource function as a tool for planning the educational and development needs based on their competences.

The benefits of the Project are multiple. Planning and designing the educational needs and career development is highly important because the Organization faces up with high attrition rate of key personnel. Also, there is the necessity to plan and prepare employees having potentials for managerial positions. In addition, it was also interested to see which motivational programs we could use in business environment where monetary incentives are restricted by legal regulations.

Based on results of the Project, we divided key employees in four categories depend on measured competencies and created specific training programs for each category.

Keywords: assessment, educational needs, human resources.

1 INTRODUCTION

One of the key goals of Human Resources is to raise the quality of employees' competencies. This is achieved through various forms of professional training of employees through the concept of "long life learning" of continuous learning and improvement.

HR Management and Development is highly significant for achieving the designed goals of the company through neutralization of negative traits of an individual or organization, as well as through recognizing and encouraging development of positive values and available potentials.

Investing in raising the level of knowledge and skills of employees, through education and further training, improves the quality of the company's operations.

Human Resources can, in contrast to any other resources, put into function all available mental and intellectual, physical and other potentials. The work results of individuals, groups, teams and organization as a whole, depend also on behavior and level of motivation of employees and managers. Individual knowledge and abilities are unique potential of an organization, especially if they are well organized and correctly directed towards accomplishment of organizational objectives and goals (Kulic&Vasic, 2007).

One of the key objectives of Human Resources is to raise the quality of the employee's skills. This is achieved through various forms of professional development and training of employees. The main goal of learning and development policy is to acquiring new knowledge or improving existing knowledge in different fields especially skills and knowledges at key activity of enterprises. School knowledge, by its very nature, is not sufficient for employees to successfully respond to the demands of modern work and, in particular, not enough to adapt to the constantly new demands of the modern market.

The basic goal of education of employees is improvement of general qualification structure of employees, acquisition of new or improvement of existing knowledge with the aim of allocating to new / more complex jobs and improvement of competencies of employees in accordance with strategic and business goals.

Vocational training is achieved through various forms of education (trainings, courses, seminars, symposia, etc.), which enable employees to master new knowledge, skills and abilities or advance (raise to a higher level) existing knowledge, skills and abilities, and all aiming to perform tasks within the competence in a more efficient and quality way.

In JSC Elektromreža Srbije the planner of educational need for employees is Human Resources that coordinates the process and takes a systematic approach to the organization of training through
maintenance and development of the Training Catalog and the List of Education. Managers also identify
the difference between the required and the existing level of competences of their employees and
determine the needs for additional education.

When we plan vocational trainings for employees, we can do this based on assessment by managers
about what skills the employee is missing and what he needs to learn in order to better perform a certain
job. Skills define specific learned activities, and they range widely in terms of complexity. Knowing which
skills a person possesses helps us determine whether their training and experience has prepared them
for a specific type of workplace activity. In other words, skills tell us what types of abilities a person
needs to perform a specific activity or job (H. Van Iddekinge, J. Putka & P. Campbell, 2011).

But, how do we plan soft skills trainings for employees? How does an individual perform a job
successfully? How do they behave in the workplace environment to achieve the desired result?
Competencies provide that missing piece of the puzzle by translating skills into on-the-job behaviors
that demonstrate the ability to perform the job requirements competently. Competencies describe the
skills, knowledge, behaviors, personal characteristics, and motivations associated with success in a job

It is important to estimate the potentials of employees, what are the competencies that need to be
developed and why it is important for a company to develop these competencies with the employee. So,
whether we plan to develop an employee in a managerial or professional direction. Also, what motivates
the employee, which values system employee shares and what he/she considers important. In relation
to these results, education and development programs have been created.

What we needed in the company is a systematic approach to planning education and career
development of individuals. Therefore, we have joined the Key Personnel Assessment Project to assess
the competencies of employees in an objective way, establish a gap between the necessary and current
competencies and plan the educational needs according to the data obtained.

Our Company faces up with high attrition rate of key personnel and therefore is the necessity to plan
and prepare employees having potentials for managerial positions. Also, our Company doesn’t have
Results of the Project were the framework for designing and organizing employees educational and
development programs. In addition, it was also interested to see which motivational programs we could
use in business environment where monetary incentives are restricted by legal regulations.

We may distinguished three basic groups of techniques, i.e. measures for motivating employees: money
and material benefits, content and organization of work (active cooperation, consultation of employees
about the things that are within the scope of their competence; company relies on someone to respect
him, that he has a reputation, that he is accepted) and Improvement of physical working conditions (a
very comprehensive program of measures in order to improve the work, equipment, conditions,
personnel, climate and culture of the organization (Čizmić S., 1995).

Project main objectives were:

- Identifying employees with distinctive leadership potentials vs expert positions potential
- Identifying key motivational factors in employees with distinctive professional, development and
  leadership potentials
- Making employee development and motivational programs
- Create soft skill training programs based on results

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 The Sample

The research was conducted in JSC Elektromreža Srbije. Our target group were employees with a
university degree that showed a good performance score in the annual performance appraisal process
(> 8, 6-10 level). In this way, we have selected those employees that are pre-registered to develop them
further into managerial or expert positions.

The sample consisted of 198 employees - 30% to 30 years old, 26% 31-40 years old, 29% 41-50 years
old and 15% older than 50 years old. The sample consisted of 104 man and 94 woman.
2.2 The methodology

Based on the Company's needs and the basic goals of the Project, to identify the groups of employees with managerial potentials in relation to groups of employees with professional potentials, and in order to scroll the education plan and develop the competencies of both groups, the competencies we focus on are first defined. We focused on four competences:

- Ability to build efficient teams
- Initiative and problem-solving ability
- Managing other persons (delegating and controlling)
- Communication and social skills (conflict and stress management)

As stated, there are many definitions of competencies. It is the ability to do something successfully or efficiently or is the capability to apply or use the set of related knowledge, skills, and abilities required to successfully perform 'critical work functions' or tasks in a defined work setting. By relying on such definitions, we have measured the competencies indirectly through its factors.

The specificity of this approach is that we used instruments for assessing cognitive capacities, personality traits, professional interests, motivational factors, and in order to obtain data on competences based on these data. The psychological tests we used were standardized and published by the Center for Applied Psychology of Serbia.

The achievement obtained through psychological tests was verified through a standardized interview, which provided additional information on competencies and motivational factors.

As a third, very objective way of obtaining information, assessment workshops were created, in which groups of respondents were assigned group tasks while four independent assessors observed their behavior and recorded the presence of indicators defined for each of the assessed competences.

The methodology applied rests on the following principles:

- Scientific justification;
- Integration with the most complete occupational information database;
- Protection of individual privacy rights, respecting the rules of occupation;
- All information and data referred to in reports have been "translated" to the level of competencies, potential and development-related tasks;
- Option of multiple data validation via three assessment levels: achievements test scores, structured interviews, cross assessment from assessment workshops

Information obtained upon implementation of methodology are:

- Leadership potential (estimated by competency set)
- Stress resistance
- Conflict situation behavior
- Team work potential
- Learning and development potentials

2.3 Instruments and tools

Totalassessment - platform for online testing that offers a large number of already implemented psychological instruments as general intelligence tests, specific abilities, memory, tasks of exquisite functions, emotional intelligence, personality inventory, implicit attitudes. This is a platform for assessment of cognitive capacities, personal traits based on Big Five model, professional interests, as well as for assessment of motivational factors. It is based on the most modern knowledge in the field of psychology.

Structured interview – reviewing the career evolution, motivational factors as well as validation of the results obtained via tests. Interviews were conducted by psychologists-trained interviewers
**Assessment workshops** – 6 - 9 attendees perform the group task while 4 observers assess behavioral indicators of particular competencies by pre-defined criteria and parameters. This is the high-level objectivity approach.¹

### 3 RESULTS

A complete group of 198 employees showed that, on average, there are high cognitive capacities, excessive honesty, stability, discipline, integrity and a friendly attitude towards people.

The dominant type of interest at the whole sample level is research - 80% of respondents prefer the intellectual challenges most.

The dominant value is Achievement (Competence) - to work in a results-oriented organization and enable employees to use their strongest abilities, giving them the sense of harnessing their own abilities and the importance of their own achievement.

By gender, there is a significant difference between men and women by the fact that for women it is a more important motive for Achievements, while men are more important in Management support.

By age, there are significant differences in relation to dominant motives. For groups of up to 30 years less important are motive of Recognition and Independence. As a motivational measure, it is necessary to engage them in teams, to give them mentors. Young people are significantly more important than the other groups in Relations between colleagues. Groups 30-41 years are less important in Recognition and Status compared to other groups. In relation to all other groups, Support motives are more important to them.

According to the motive of "Working Conditions" there is no significant difference in groups. It is interesting that in the sample of women, with the flow of time, the conditions of work are less significant, and later (in the fourth group) they become more important.

After applying the methodology, individual reports were prepared for each employee. At the beginning of each individual report, there is a summary report for each participant. In addition to the achievements on the test, the Summarized Report is integrated and data from the individual interview, as well as data from the assessment workshops (for those candidates who were involved in the workshops). The method of the interview and the workshop was used to verify / correct the test achievement, and the data were integrated into the Summary Report as a correction of the scores on certain test reports. The summarized report also contains recommendations for developmental measures / proposals for improvement.

Following the summary report, the following reports are integrated into the same document:

- Leadership potential
- Resistance to stress
- Behavior in conflict situations
- Potentials for team work
- Potential for learning and development
- Key motivators

#### 3.1 Identified groups by achievement

By integrating data from all sources, employees are classified into **4 groups**:

- **Group of employees with a strong management potential** (7% of the sample): Employees for whom we are highly likely to be able to achieve successful results and demonstrate a high level of achievement in a managerial position - are recommended for a managerial position. Aggregating estimates from all sources that a person has high potential for management. In addition, these individuals also have high potential for teamwork, stress tolerance, and are not conflicting.

¹ Examples of tasks and evaluated indicators are given in the supplement
• **Group of employees that has a moderate management potential** (15% of the sample): Employees possess moderate management skills, they could, with additional training skills, develop managerial competencies to plan for a particular managerial position.

• **Group of employees with more capacity to learn and develop in relation to management potentials** (47% of the sample): They have some of the leading components, but they have more pronounced capacities and greater motivation for the development of narrower skills. This group includes candidates who have explicitly determined that at this point they do not want a managerial position, that at the moment they are more for the expert position. In addition, here are candidates who did not match the results of the tests with the impression of the interviewer.

• **Group of employees with potential to perform operational work and reduced management potential** (31% of the sample): Leading positions could be a major challenge for these candidates. They function well on operational tasks and should consider motivational measures that are more relevant to performance and competence development in accordance with individual reports.

### 3.2 Training proposal based on individual reports

In addition to the development and motivation programs that we customized individually for each group of employees, we created special soft skills trainings based on the gap between the competences identified and the necessary competencies for managerial and expert positions.

The first group of employees with a strong management potential (7% of the sample) are those that we prepare for managers shortly after retirement of employees in managerial positions. They have developed almost all leadership competencies, and training is focused on Emotional leadership – how to manage your own and others' emotions in business with the goal of motivating and managing others and Development of personal leadership - strengthening self-confidence.

The second group requires the most training because it can be useful for managerial positions if well educated. For this group, we planned training focused on the development of Leadership skills - Manage, Goal Setting, Job Delegation, Time Management, Team Forming Skills.

The third group develops toward the expert positions and the training are focused on developing Analytical thinking, Decision making, Diplomatic way of communicating with others, Building a strong team of associates, Efficient use of time.

The fourth group are employees who are adequately deployed in their jobs and can be trained in their field of work through vocational training. Specific soft skills trainings are adapted to the employees of this group based on their individual reports and are based mainly on Effective communication skills, Stress reduction skills, Communicative and Assertive skills.

### 4 CONCLUSIONS

Planning soft skills training and, generally, development of interpersonal skills is a very specific field and is often based on the opinion of managers or the wishes of employees. Unlike professional trainings that clearly show what employees need to learn, in this case, this assessment is reduced to a subjective one.

Therefore, we have accessed this objective method of assessing the competencies of employees, and on the basis of the obtained data we created specific training to develop exactly what these groups of employees need.

The cycle period for which employees were referred for training lasted 6 months after which we will monitor their development and try to determine the concrete benefits of the Project.

During the Project, we have achieved that employees show a high level of motivation and interest in participating in all project activities. The very fact that we are dealing with their potentials and wanting to improve them with concrete training was motivation in itself that was reflected in better Performance grade in the next annual assessment. During the interview, almost all employees reacted very positively, showed a high level of motivation and had an extremely affirmative attitude.

The feedback we received from concrete training is extremely positive, the employees reacted very well and we will receive follow-up after 6 months when we will be able to see concrete progress.
Our main goal is for education planning to be primarily done on the basis of recommendations established in the Performance management and evaluation of Assessment projects, which provide a realistic picture about individual capacities and development potential of employees.

HR in this way takes care of employees and focuses on their real needs. By planning the educational needs this way, HR can follow the improvement and development of employees and measure the results.

REFERENCES


APPENDIX

Assessment Workshop – Description of Observation Tasks and Criteria

1. Competence to be assessed: Leadership through team-based decision making and ability to build efficient teams

Task: Assignment of your team (all participants) is to jointly make a decision that will make all team members happy, it is necessary to define key motivation factors influencing your work, and to make arrangement about common proposal of one motivational measure to be adopted and applied on your team over the next six months. Upon agreement, it is necessary to choose a person who will present the selected measure giving explanation why that measure is the one being proper for the majority of team members. You have maximum 25 minutes for the entire task (including the presentation of the motivational measure). If you have exceed the given time, the task will be interrupted.

Some of indicators for Quality of interactions (active listening actively, asking questions actively; social skills):

- Positive: Establishes eye contact – looks at all team members and addresses all of them – follows the presentation of other interlocutors nonverbally
- Negative: Does not establish eye contact, watches only selected members and addresses them exclusively, - does not follow the presentation of other interlocutors nonverbally

2. Competence to be assessed: Leadership through Communicationa and Social Skills and Exerting Impact on Others

Task: The two-stage task is done by two teams:

In the course of first stage, any of the smaller teams need to elaborate the following topics: where do I see my company will be in ten years; what are the biggest development perspectives for the company; where are the risks; if it were up to me, this would be the way how I would develop my business role within the company and for these reasons.

In the second stage groups are brought together and debate, presenting their arguments about importance of one/ another project vision, the aim is that each group recognises the importance of the another group’s project/perspective – exchanging perspectives and experiences. Finally, it is important that each team summarises what they observed to be the most significant from another team’s perspective. The most important is to follow whether the debate has been
developed into exchange of experiences or into conflict, and to see the members of which tema are the ones who contribute the most to the conflict / exchange.

Some of the indicators for Communication and social skills:

- **Positive:** Establishes eye contact, - looks at all group members and addresses all of them, - follows the presentation of her/his collocutor (partner in conversation) nonverbally, - listens the other person, - improper tone of voice (optimal speech loudness and velocity), - respects his/her collocutor

- **Negative:** Does not establish eye contact, - looks at only isolated members and addresses them only, - does not follow the presentation of her/his collocutor nonverbally, - interrupts others in their talk, - improper tone of voice (too loud, quite, sarcastic), - ironic, ridiculing