

ENHANCING PERFORMANCE THROUGH SKILL MATRIX

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ABSTRACT:

Economic development – be it of a Country, State, Sector or industry depends on various driving forces. One of such driving forces is 'Skill and Talent Development' which fosters growth. Skill necessarily needs to be learnt and practiced with structured approach. Progress results with effective usage of skills and talent – as it is one of the important resources for growth.

The economy is truly focused on making India the Skill Capital of the World. Government, Institutions & Industry have engulfed themselves into building value-added initiatives to upgrade skill levels right from the education to professional careers.

A systematic approach to 'skill mapping' through 'skill matrix process' undoubtedly helps ascertain current levels of skills but also provides a road-map to build skill on the basis of identified gaps. Structured approach to fill the gaps through value added inputs ensure escalated skill levels and also provides path for multiple skill acquisition. The paper focuses on such details which will support 'skill development' in existing workforce at various manufacturing industries.

Keywords: Talent, Skills, Competency, Manufacturing

INTRODUCTION

The Indian Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship has clearly defined in its Mission statement the dire need to enhance skills and knowledge for economic progress. With the visible fact that India faces shortages of skilled workforce, it has become highly necessary that rigorous efforts be put up to initiate proceedings which build skills right from the educational levels to the professional levels in any sector or industry.

According to the Bureau of Labour Statistics, “increasingly, management recognizes that training offers a way of developing skills, enhancing productivity and quality of work, and building worker loyalty to the firm, and most importantly, increasing individual and organizational performance to achieve business results. Training is widely accepted as an employee benefit and a method of improving employee morale, and enhancing employee skills has become a business imperative. Increasingly, managers and leaders realize that the key to business growth and success is through developing the skills and knowledge of its workforce.” The purpose of skill development focuses also on generating employability options of the workforce so that they are embedded with new technological advances and also caters to the ever increasing demands of the labour market – (Amitendu Palit, 2009). It becomes important that there has to be value added inputs to the skills levels of the new workforce and also to those who have attained a specific level of proficiency. ‘Knowledge workers are to be defined by having special skills developed through extensive education, training and which is designed to have significant favourable impact on the performance of the Organization’ (Jackson Hitt & Denisi, 2003)

As the entire focus shifts at National Levels – similar such efforts need to be driven at the individual manufacturing sites too. It is stated in a report published (Accenture, 2014) that

80% of the jobs in manufacturing company requires higher skill level and other 20% are probably semi-skilled. The gravity of the situation practically remains indifferent when we consider the industrial set up. Similar or rather greater scarcity of skilled resource puts any industry in jeopardy resulting into quantum losses in productivity, time & deliveries which have cyclic unfavourable business impact.

By linking human resources processes to desired competencies, organizations can shape the capabilities of its workforce and achieve better results (Donzelli et al., 2006) and it may be possible for an organization to build ongoing snapshots of the overall knowledge capital and skills portfolio of its Work-force.

According to Kumari and Sita (2010) observed that the Indian companies have realized the importance of human assets and have started using competency approach towards the human resource management to improve the quality human resources, generating trust & learning, result oriented, empowering employees, analyzing training & development needs, rating the employees, increased satisfaction, increased. Productivity and strengthening employee engagements has started among the employees and employers.

In order to ensure that the skill sets are assessed, analysed, developed in a structured manner, the skill matrix tool is useful. The process ensures that there is a sustained learning and development of skill attributes which benefits the professional and also the organization at large.

Challenges

- The operator develops skills over a period due to continuous working over a machine or a process, dealing with concerns, providing varied solutions to given problems. This results in higher level of expertise and escalated skill levels to perform a given task.

Over a period of time, they said skill levels reach the peak level and monotony creeps in affecting the general working tendency thereby losing sharp skills edge leading to loss in productivity, concentration, avoidable errors and leading to probable accident.

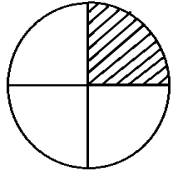
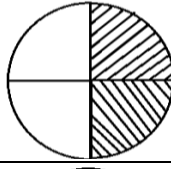
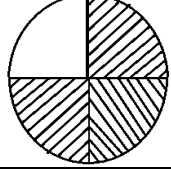
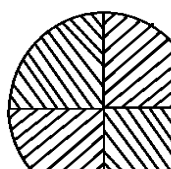
- Over a period of time – the motivation to learn new skills may go down. Apart from skill the will to learn more skills is also important factor which can be experienced by most of the companies.
- The time to acquire or impart new skills is scarce. Enough time and effort need to be injected to build new skills or make others acquire new skills. However, the productivity and delivery pressures may restrict freelance training of skills and this issue is also a concern.
- New process development / technological changes need to be learnt quickly – which often gets delayed due to conflict of interest of learners and also skill providers.
- Generally skilled operators do find comfort in doing the same work – however, multi-skilling though need of the hour – becomes difficult proposition unless supported with recognition mechanism.

Discussion

A framework to assess the skills of technicians is taken as a model in this paper. We will be considering a case of machine operators in an Engineering industry to illustrate the skill matrix model.

Steps involved in Skill Matrix exercise

- Assessment parameters of given process / operation by experts (Assuming that a blank circle is meant for those who cannot perform a task)
- Standard scale – Levels for assessment (as graphically illustrated below)
- Define clearly identifiable & measureable milestones

| | | |
|----------------|---|---|
| Level 1 |  | OPERATOR CAN PERFORM WITH HELP |
| Level 2 |  | OPERATOR CAN PERFORM WITHOUT HELP UNDER SUPERVISION |
| Level 3 |  | OPERATOR CAN PERFORM TASK AND TRAIN OTHERS |
| Level 4 |  | OPERATOR CAN PERFORM, TRAIN OTHERS AND SUGGEST IMPROVEMENTS (HIGHEST LEVEL OF SKILLS) |

On having completed the task – each operator assessment is done on parameters like

- Current levels of skills attained - Level 1 - 2 - 3 -4
- Rating should be understandable to the operator concerned to get motivated

On having completed the task for all the operators – it becomes easy to assess various levels under which the skills are distributed in a given section or shop.

On having done this – further planning to improvise the skills is done as below –

- a) Preparation of a skill matrix chart with operator’s details (including photo) and the current status of skill levels attained. Balance skills obviously get noticed.
- b) Dialogue with the operator need to clearly understand the gaps to move ahead on the skill matrix with a clearly defined action plan
- c) Action plan to scale up the skill levels will include
 - a. Need based modules for skill learning (classroom training)

- b. Need based practical skills imparting series with experts
- c. Exposure with experienced professional on improving the expertise
- d. Handholding (with supervision) during induction to new skills
- e. Carefully monitored skills without supervision
- f. Independent access to deliver the new skill sets with clearly assessed score sheet.

Development of Rating Sheet

- a. The template / rating sheet for skills need to be carefully devised with all major operator attributes
- b. It is advisable to provide rating score (rather than just a click) – since the score will pinpoint the take off point for skill development and also allow the assessor to score the development that takes place subsequently after various initiatives.
- c. The assessment need to be done by two or three experts who know the work and criticality of the said operation.
- d. Scoresheets need to be separately provided to each assessor in order to get a perfect score and to avoid any possible error or possible favouritism due to long acquaintance with the fellow operators.

Skill Assessment Sheet (example)

| Levels (1 to 4) | Skills Attributes | Opr 1 | Opr 2 | Opr 3 | Opr 4 | Opr 5 | Opr 6 | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|--|
| Level 1 | | | | | | | | |
| Level 2 | | | | | | | | |
| Level 3 | | | | | | | | |
| Level 4 | | | | | | | | |

This is a basic template and one can devise fitting score sheet which helps the organization ascertain the actual scores earned by any operator during a given point of time.

The assessment / review period need to be fixed and clearly quoted on the template so that the increase in skills can be clearly illustrated. Secondly – the initiatives to develop skills also need to find its way to the training calendar devised for the organization.

Way forward

With the rising demand for higher level of skills sets, it has become critically important for every industry to set up a strategy for skill development with the industry with similar focus as like any other business strategy.

Growth without skill build up initiatives will fall short of its target and on the other hand with proactively planning can help the organization do better to reach and meet dynamic demands of the skills and deliverables.

Skills succession planning also assumes greater importance as we do it for higher positions. Whatever impacts the productivity impacts the overall growth potential and hence becomes important planning tool.

Skill Recognition programs also become vital since motivated employees make a positive difference to the organization. A clearly defined skill development recognition program needs to be devised. This program need to have a time bound skill development agenda – because time is money and skills learnt earlier will provide substantial benefits to the organization.

Conclusions:

Skill enhancement is a structured process and needs to be closely monitored for effective results. The approach towards evolving standards needs to be scientific and measurable. On having defined the parameters, scale and assessment criteria – enough attention needs to be paid to correctly assess each and every operator.

The gaps thus identified form the basis for further skill development exercises. As one prepares for this exercise it is advisable that simultaneously necessary modules be prepared for each of the parameters which become handy during skill development series.

Series of quality communication dialogues are necessary to build necessary curiosity and motivation amongst the target work force so that the exercise will be seen as developmental activity. With a good conducive climate building the assessment and further actions get the necessary momentum and operators will feel pride in participating and developing their next level skill sets.

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