

## Job/Task/Work Analysis/Competency Modeling and Classification<sup>12</sup>

Before we can hire people, before we can assess their performance, before we can decide on their salaries, before we can train them - before we can do virtually anything about jobs and employees, we first have to understand what the jobs are. What tasks do they include? What skills do job incumbents need? Where does the job fit within the organization? "Job analysis constitutes the preceding step of every application of psychology to human resources (HR) management" (Sanchez & Levine, 2012, p. 398). While not all I-O Psychologists specialize in Job Analysis, all of them need to know how these techniques work and how they're used.

Most methods of job analysis fall into one of two categories: *work-oriented* and *worker-oriented* (Brannick, Levine, & Morgeson, 2007). Work-oriented methods focus on developing a list of tasks that the worker does. For example, a retail store sales clerk might assist customers in finding merchandise, answer customer questions, use a cash register to take money and make change, bag the merchandise and thank the customer, among other responsibilities. If we put this all together, it produces a *job description* that can be given to new employees so that they understand their job.

*Worker-oriented* methods focus on identifying the qualities – knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics (KSAOs), such as personality attributes – needed by an employee to successfully perform the job. Our retail sales clerk might need to be friendly, detail-oriented, reliable, and have the ability to learn about the merchandise the store has in stock. This information might be used by Human Resources to screen job applicants.

The information that goes into a job analysis can come from current employees, their supervisors, written material about the job, and even from customers. It can be gained via surveys, interviews/focus groups, or direct observation of the job, often using all three approaches. In addition to the uses already mentioned, having a job analysis can help the company develop a salary structure, design training programs, create a performance appraisal system, and do many other functions.

A variation on traditional job analysis is *Competency Modeling*, and it is different in some ways from job analysis (Brannick et al., 2007; Sanchez & Levine, 2009; Shippmann et al., 2000; Stevens, 2013). A statement often heard is that competency modeling analyzes jobs while taking into account the strategic goals of the organization rather than looking at each job in isolation. While there is agreement that this is a good idea, much work still needs to be done on developing and refining techniques to actually do this and identifying exactly what is meant by a "competency".

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One of the most recent outcomes of improved job analysis methodology has been a system for classifying jobs, developed under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Labor/Education & Training Administration and accessible to HR and I-O professionals and to the general public ([www.onetcenter.org](http://www.onetcenter.org) and [www.onetonline.org](http://www.onetonline.org)). Using this Occupational Information Network (O\*NET) system, one can look up job descriptions, job requirements, vocational informational, and a host of other information. O\*NET is also proving to be a valuable resource for studying characteristics of jobs and *classifying* the jobs into job families.

Why is all this important? There's a two-fold answer. First, organizations want employees who are a good fit with the demands of the job. But just as important, workers need to know whether a job is a good fit for them. Are these tasks I can do? Would I enjoy this job? What demands does the job entail? Do I need to drive a car? Enter information into a computer? Interact with customers? Lift heavy objects? Be available on weekends? We want to let people know what's expected of them and what rewards the job provides so they can make a decision about whether this is a job they really want. At the heart of job analysis and competency modeling is the concept of *person-job fit*. The better the fit, the happier both the organization and the worker will be.

### References

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