

The Truth About Competencies...

Who's Conning Who?

- ❖ The competency phenomenon... where have we come from?
- ❖ Some common cons around competencies
- ❖ Why competency models have appeal
- ❖ A job analysis approach to competencies
- ❖ An alternative model of competencies
- ❖ Introducing the OPD System
- ❖ Practical demonstration of the OPD system

WHAT DO WE KNOW?

- ❖ Internationally, the reliance on competency models has become a widespread practice. A web search by OPRA for 'competency models' generated 5,250,000 hits!
- ❖ Competencies are commonly used in organisations (Markus, Cooper-Thomas, Allpress, 2005), however there is little to **no standardisation** ... there is a large myriad of ways to essentially say exactly the same thing!
- ❖ The extensive use of competency models is indicative of the **volume and popularity of competencies**, but what is actually real?

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

- ❖ The volume of competency information underlines the fact that there is **no magic bullet or one 'correct' approach** to competency success.
- ❖ Competencies are essentially a **lexicon or semantic framework**, not a psychometric measure.
- ❖ The success of **competency models lies in the application of competency model tools**, not in the tools themselves.

Competency Cons!

CON ONE:

- ❖ "Competence is the same as competency"

REALITY:

- ❖ Specifically, the word "competence" is derived from the Latin word "competere" meaning "suitable."

Cambridge dictionary definition:
"the ability to do something to a level that is acceptable"

McClelland (1973) definition:
"components of performance associated with life outcomes"

Competency Cons!

- ❖ Competence describes what people **CAN** do
 - Competence is often down to IQ, technical expertise and a few general traits (i.e. conscientiousness)
- ❖ Competency focuses on **HOW** they do it
- ❖ Competence and competency are fundamentally different from one another:

COMPETENCE	COMPETENCY
Skill based	Behaviour based
Standard attained	Manner of behaviour
What is measured	How the standard is measured

CON TWO:

- ❖ “My competency model is the holy grail of all competency models”

REALITY:

- ❖ Competency models primarily differ in the semantics they use
- ❖ There is no specific distributor that holds the “master list” for competency modeling

Competency Cons!

CON THREE:

- ❖ “This competency model possesses high reliability and validity to the work environment”

REALITY:

- ❖ From a measurement perspective, the use of competency models lack both validity and reliability in the work environment
- ❖ There is a substantial and unquestionable gap between the many claims and actual measurement benefits delivered by competency initiatives

Competency models are a psychological rather than a psychometric construct. To ascribe measurement properties to competencies is NONSENSE.

CON FOUR:

- ❖ “Competencies act like traits, they are stable across environments”

REALITY:

- ❖ Competencies are task specific and vary from environment to environment
- ❖ A recent analysis of 250 development centre ratings (simulation exercises and psychometric assessments) indicated that although the psychometric assessment results possessed stable measurement characteristics across the development centre, competency measurement varied substantially from situation to situation (Jackson, MacGregor & Englert, 2006, unpublished)

CON FIVE:

- ❖ “Competencies are complex.... specific training is required to understand what they mean”

REALITY:

- ❖ HR Practitioners do not need to undergo specific, and often expensive training to understand competencies
- ❖ HR Practitioners have an understanding of the specific knowledge, skills and attributes required for jobs

The Competency Truth....

- ❖ Competencies mean different things depending on who you are speaking to (Zemke, 1982)
 - Lack on consensus around what defines a competency
 - Multiple domains in which the term is prevalent
- ❖ Competence is often down to technical expertise, a degree of intellectual 'smarts' and some general traits (conscientious)
- ❖ From a measurement perspective, the use of competency models **lack both validity and reliability** in the work environment
- ❖ Little research exists which validates the competency model approach
- ❖ There is a substantial gap between the many claims and the actual **measurable benefits** delivered by competency initiatives

- ❖ A **common language** for describing work requirements
 - Basis for two-way communication
 - Easy to understand

- ❖ A framework for **integrating** personnel systems
 - Integrate selection, training, performance management, succession planning, and career development

- ❖ A guide for development or **performance improvement**
 - Provide a clear framework for coaching, providing performance feedback, and shaping of desired employee behavior patterns

- ❖ A **strategic** linkage to business strategies

- ❖ Job analysis is the 'gold' standard upon which all competency development should be based. Job analysis is essentially the collection of data which is:
 - **Observable:** able to be seen, heard or otherwise perceived by a person other than the person performing the action
 - **Descriptive of work behaviour:** not the personal characteristics or performance effectiveness of the employees who perform the job
 - **Verifiable and replicable:** for accuracy and validity
 - **Reflects current as well as future role requirements:** rather than historically orientated features
 - **Collected from several sources:** and people most closely associated with the role

Competency models are the by-product of a robust, thorough job analysis

Two recognised job analysis tools include the PAQ and CMQ

PAQ - Mechanically oriented jobs

CMQ - Generalisable up to professional jobs

❖ The Failure of O*NET – What went wrong?


- O*NET: Job Analysis tool distributed by US Government
- Recently admitted that O*NET is so seriously flawed that it can't be used for selection
- Jim Woods at DOL: “don't dare use it for selection or any litigious application”

❖ Problems:

- Lack of construct validity e.g. can't tell the difference between work versus employee trait constructs
- No moderate or high specificity data
- No evidence of validity of employee-trait inferences
- No evidence of accuracy of JA ratings
- Terrible interrater agreement, even using trained analysts

THE CMQ Job Analysis Alternative

- ❖ A major strength of the CMQ lies in the verifiability that is built into its items and rating scales
- ❖ The high verifiability of CMQ data - and the low verifiability of ratings collected using the O*NET and similar "holistic" job questionnaires stems from the fact that there is simply no comparison between the level of behavioural specificity of their items
- ❖ The CMQ rates observable, verifiable job behaviours, and it breaks complex work activities down into their component parts

	General Information About This Job	
	In this section...	you will describe general aspects of your job, the working environment, and the people you supervise.

INSTRUCTIONS


The CMQ job analysis survey asks you to describe a range of general activities that may be performed on your job. Please answer all questions accurately and honestly. As you complete this survey, **please refer to this blue area of each screen** in order to receive instructions or tips on how to make your ratings.

Different workers, even those who hold the same job title, may perform different activities. When rating, be sure to describe your job **as it is actually performed by you**. You may have to think back over a period of a few months to a year or more to get a complete description of your job's activities.

If the job has **changed** recently, however, only rate it **as it is performed now**. In all cases, describe only the activities that are performed on **this** job, not those that you may have performed on other jobs that you held before this one (even if you are still able to perform those activities).

Do NOT worry if many of the questions do not apply to your specific job. This survey was constructed to apply to all different kinds of jobs, and as such, will probably contain many questions that do not apply to your specific job.

When you are ready to continue, press the "RATE This Section" button above.







	Supervision That You RECEIVE From Others	
	While performing your job, are you required to have your work supervised by...	Other people who are NOT employees of your own organization (outside auditors, government inspectors, etc.)?
If YES, how CLOSE is this supervision?	<input type="text" value="- select one -"/>	

In order to accomplish the **main mission** of your job, **HOW CRITICAL** is this supervision?

Rate the supervision you **receive from others** using both of the above scales.

If this is NOT part of the job, press the NEXT button to move on. If it IS part of the job, please answer ALL of the above questions before pressing the NEXT button. To go back to the previous screen, press the "<" button. To go to the start of this section, press the "<<" button.

Second-Order Scores

Dimension	Scale Score	Percentile Rank
DATA: Decision-Making, Information Processing, Managerial Decisions	6 	14 
PEOPLE: Interpersonal Contacts, Info. Exchange	2 	2 
THINGS: Machines, Tools, Equipment, Physical Activities, Environment	8 	11 

❖ Common-metric items

- Moderate low specificity descriptions of the general behaviours involved in work
- E.g., “This job involves attending meetings to evaluate projects”

❖ Common-metric rating scales

- Constant across positions (i.e., the same rating scales are used for all jobs) and are capable of retaining the same meaning regardless of the job being analysed
- E.g., “This activity is performed hourly, daily, weekly”

- ❖ OPRA attempted to quantify the output of the CMQ into competencies with little success
- ❖ We have a clear indication that any link between job analysis and competencies must be **qualitative not quantitative**
- ❖ OPRA analysis of competency-based development centre ratings for 250 managers shows that competencies could not be measured with the quantitative robustness that was being presumed (**lack of reliability and validity**)

- ❖ What would a robust competency model look like?
 - High job coverage
 - Theoretical links back to standard measures like traits (indicative only)
 - High lexical coverage of standard models
 - Strong practical focus

- ❖ Introducing a universal, multiple job **Organisational Performance Dimensions (OPD)** model
 - **Organisational:** the descriptors must contribute to overall effective and strategic functioning of an organisation. This includes individual, team and process capabilities of an organisation.
 - **Performance:** to have utility in the work environment, descriptors must differentiate between high, mediocre and low performing individuals, teams and organisations.
 - **Dimensions:** the observable measures that predict individual, team and organisational performance including abilities, attitudes and behaviours.

Purpose:

To obtain a common set of building block OPD's from a variety of jobs to differentiate between high, mediocre and low performers

- ❖ To develop a generalisable framework of OPD's across professions, a literature search was completed
- ❖ From the list of competencies highlighted in the research, clusters of OPD's utilising **similar knowledge, skills and abilities** were grouped together
- ❖ Twenty descriptors were found across the literature on competency models
- ❖ Of the 20 descriptors, **13 universal OPD's** emerged that were common across the wide range of jobs sampled

The Thirteen Universal OPDs

- ❖ Accountability
- ❖ Analytical Reasoning
- ❖ Communication
- ❖ Cultural Awareness
- ❖ Customer Orientation
- ❖ Decision Making
- ❖ Ethics
- ❖ Initiative
- ❖ Planning and Organising
- ❖ Relationship Skills
- ❖ Resilience
- ❖ Self-Awareness/Self-Development
- ❖ Technical Orientation

- ❖ The OPD system is an interface that allows organisations to generate customised:
 - competency reports on personality and ability data
 - application forms/blanks
 - structured interview templates
 - reference checking forms

- ❖ The outputs of any competency based reporting can be fully customised to suit organisational needs

- ❖ All outputs are designed to be user friendly, powerful and precise

- ❖ Benefits of the OPD System include:
 - assistance in aligning strategic and transactional HR processes
 - relevance at an individual, team and organisational level
 - alignment to organisational and business goals
 - Emphasising core performance indicators rather than specific technical skills

- ❖ For OPD based competency reports, the OPD system works in line with the 'GeneSys' psychometric test suite

- ❖ Other functions within the OPD system can be done outside GeneSys

Demonstration of the OPD System

❖ In-House Solution

- Allows access to all reporting functions with no on-going costs
 - OPD Software: \$2,500

❖ Assessment Testing and Bureau Service

- NB: For Assessment Testing, costs are in addition to regular prices
- OPD Reports
 - 1 - 10 Competencies: \$120 per report
 - 11 - 15 Competencies: \$150 per report
 - 16 - 20 Competencies: \$170 per report
- OPD Application Blanks, Referee Checks & Interview Forms
 - 1 - 10 Competencies: \$100 per item
 - 11 - 15 Competencies: \$130 per item
 - 16 - 20 Competencies: \$150 per item

- ❖ Performance Optimisation System: Competency based performance management system
- ❖ OPRA Survey: 360 degree measurement

Questions?