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Kenexa HR Thought Leadership®:

COMPETENCIES: LINKING ASSESSMENT TO PERFORMANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

By Ame Creglow, M.S.

HOST: Welcome to the Kenexa HR Thought Leadership Podcast series. This series was created to educate, inspire, and fuel the evolution of leadership in our organizations, our communities and our world.

I'm your host Jace Bonsall.

In this episode, we will listen to a reading entitled "Competencies: Linking Assessment to Performance and Development" by Ame Creglow. Mrs. Creglow is the Global Assessment Director of Operations at Kenexa, with more than 18 years of experience in Human Resources. The purpose of this structured competency-based interviewing is to help organizations hire and promote people who will succeed in their jobs. Different jobs require different competencies. Competencies are important because they can be used to improve performance in at least three ways: selection, feedback and development.

MRS. CREGLAW: Competencies have been defined in a variety of different ways by the scientific community as well as the Human Resources field. Generally speaking, most definitions of competencies required by people to succeed in the workplace include something about the capability to become good at a particular activity by utilizing one's knowledge, skills, past experience and natural talent. The competency of Delegation could therefore be defined as the ability to delegate assignments, projects or tasks to ensure that each person is working on the highest priority activity and the one that they are most likely to be able to successfully complete. It stands to reason then that different jobs require different competencies. Competencies are significant because they can be used as yardsticks to improve performance (both individual and organizational) in at least three ways: Selection, Feedback and Development.

1. Selection

To the extent that new employees can be hired into the job already possessing most, if not all, of the competencies required for successful performance, the probability of their learning the job quickly and executing at a high level is much greater. Competencies can thus be used to guide recruitment (wherein the company seeks to identify recruiting sources rich in desired competencies) and selection (where the company builds structured interviews around the critical competencies it requires).

2. Feedback

Research has shown that employees receiving feedback about their strengths and weaknesses improve their performance more than those who don't receive feedback (Smither, 1995). Furthermore, it appears that those who need it most are the ones who also benefit the most from feedback. Competencies provide a useful framework for organizing job-relevant feedback to improve performance.

3. Development

Finally, competencies can be an effective way to organize and guide developmental activities. Although enhancing one's knowledge or changing one's skill level is not easy, those who make development a priority can improve their resulting performance. By involving oneself in developmental processes designed to enhance or increase a particular competency, overall job performance can more easily be improved.

The Concept of Critical Competencies

Critical job competencies are the knowledge and skills required to perform a particular job especially well. The critical competency concept is reflected in the fact that employees who excel at particular jobs exhibit similar competencies.

When seeking to fill a position, the objective typically includes:

- Recruiting and selecting individuals who possess relevant job competencies
- Helping individuals improve their performance by further developing relevant job competencies

Meeting these objectives requires a thorough understanding of exactly which competencies are required by the job and how any one person measures up against these competencies. A comprehensive competency analysis will guide organizations in choosing the critical competencies around which a structured interview, performance appraisal, or multi-rater assessment should be created. Each of these tools will help tie critical competencies to Selection, Feedback and Development.

By identifying the critical competencies required for successful performance in a particular job, organizations can then hire better people, assess their performance based on the criteria which was used to select them, and most important, provide them with developmental opportunities in areas that will impact successful performance the most.

HOST: Thank you for joining us today for the Kenexa HR Thought Leadership Podcast series, where we seek to educate, inspire, and fuel the evolution of leadership in our organizations, our communities, and our world. If you have questions regarding today's episode, please feel free to email Mrs. Creglow at ame.creglow@kenexa.com. That's a-m-e-c-r-e-g-l-o-w@kenexa.com. We also invite you to visit our website at Kenexapods.com to find the original transcripts of this episode, that's K-E-N-E-X-A pods.com. This episode was brought to you by Kenexa, a leader in multiplying business success for organizations worldwide.

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