

AGILE BASED COMPETENCY MANAGEMENT

ABC Management

Output 1 / Activity 4

Article: The need of new approach to the competency management

Article author

E-PEERS

Date of delivery

OCTOBER 2015

Project partners



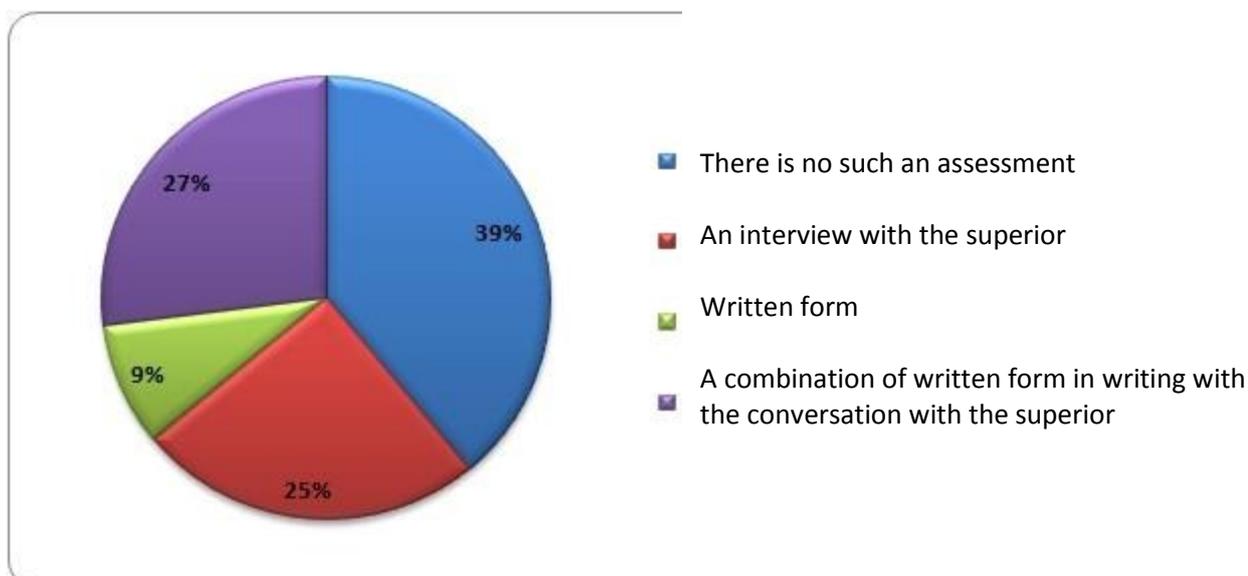


1. Classic approach to the study of competence

The classic and often used in the employees' competence assessment must meet six criteria:

- it should follow a specific purpose, with both assessor and assessed person
- it should be based on clearly defined criteria - at the same moment: concrete but flexible, allowing to adapt their job differences and specializations of employees
- it has to be tailored to the company specificity
- it should involve all employees
- it should be apparent and accepted by employees
- it should be carried out at the opportune moment for employees, in an atmosphere of trust and sincerity

However, filling all the above criteria does not protect the organization against commonly committed errors, arising generally from low involvement in the evaluation process. In a study conducted by Grafton Recruitment, half of the respondents admitted that the company where they work, do not carry out regular assessments. This indicates relatively little involvement of employers in this part of the process of HR management. Among the responses, a lot of people pointed at the regular annual employee evaluation (27% of the total respondents), less at the six-monthly (12%). One of four employee evaluation respondents pointed at only one single conversation with a supervisor, in the case of 27% of respondents - it was connected with a written form of evaluation. The results of the research are as follows:



What is the reason of such low level of employers' involvement in employees' competence assessment? Probably one of the reasons is the fact that most of the existing methods of the organisational competence measurement are based on some generalised assumption. Regardless of whether the competencies are described through definitions of different application levels of a specific competence or whether they are defined by a set of specific behaviours - the assessment sheet is the same. If, for example, the "Team building" competence is studied, then the sales manager as well as the logistics manager fill in the same sheet.

Of course, team building within a sales team is different than that of a logistics team. Both teams have different dynamics, require a different attitude and their accomplished tasks, temperament and working environment also differ.

Analysing the above example we arrive at a clear conclusion: *in order to increase the clarity and value of the competence study for the tested individual and their environment, the study should be carried out in relation to the context in which a given competence is expected.*

The content of the competence study must respect different work profiles and environments. Different individuals function in different contexts.

2. Agile approach based on cases

We should not measure everyone using the same scale. The methods used so far offer only very general definitions of competencies, descriptions of behaviours which are taken out of the work reality in which the respondent and observers function. When those methods are used, they require respondents to project general situations over more specific ones by themselves.

Let's take a closer look at the following situation: the competence assessment is carried out by 360-degree feedback. Observers fill out subsequent elements of the assessment sheet. In order to provide reliable feedback they must translate the content of the sheet into specific situations in which the tested individual was observed. On the other hand, while receiving the report, the tested individual must also translate the result into specific situations while trying to understand the received feedback. The results can be distorted at two points of interpretation: one from the



assessor's side (while trying to make the assessment) and the other from the respondent (while trying to understand the result of the assessment). Doubts are often raised at the Workshops which serve to sum up the feedback and help to work out development plans. Questions arise: "What did the observers have in mind and how should I read this feedback?"

Taking the above into consideration, in developing our Contextual Competence Assessment method, we proposed to base our study on specific, adequate situation descriptions which are related to the workplace reality. Our approach includes several important elements.

The approach to competence management proposed by us requires short intervals, fast changes and speedy development of the right competencies.

The definition of the competence has to be clear, practical and should not require interpretation by individuals taking part in the study.

The classic ways of describing the competencies by definitions or behaviours are not sufficient. We should be far more precise so we that we don't leave any space for interpretation. The language which we offer in this case is the language of specific situations. Those are typical, difficult, challenging situations which particular professional groups will face or have already faced. Such situations reflect the company reality as well as specific actions and reactions expected by the company.

Thanks to such an approach, both the tested individuals and the observers challenge themselves in the process of assessment of specific situations taken from the context of their job reality. A study constructed in this way removes both areas of interpretation.

The assessor does not have to interpret the questions in the sheet but only share his observations regarding specific situations.

Also, the assessed employees receive unambiguous information and understand how they are viewed in specific situations.

Studies constructed in this way facilitate both the process itself and also the acceptance of given feedback.

3. What are the benefits?

To sum up, let's review the benefits of using the Contextual Competence Assessment method based on specific situations:

- Firstly there is no need for interpretation while the study is being carried out and during analysis of the outcomes.
- Secondly, it lowers the risk of questioning the assessment process as something that does not relate to a specific individual's work.
- Thirdly, the tested individual receives clear, precise information about the company's expectations towards them.

In short: agile competence management and a study based on the Contextual Competence Assessment Method is an idea which aims to increase the effectiveness of key competence development.