

Career profiling extends talent management

 By [Mark Orpen](#)

16 Jul 2015

An effective tool in the development of staff, career development of individuals and the overall talent management of an organisation is career profiling, however, for it to be effective, the first step should be a gap analysis.



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This is essential in creating a profile that highlights the skills and attributes that a candidate already has, while indicating possible skills development opportunities to fill the gaps. The goal should be to compile a profile that does not only include qualities and experience, but also points out the candidate's characteristics, personality traits, intrinsic values and ethics.

The analysis session should drive the creation of the most holistic picture of the person as possible. Once the gaps have been identified, questions must be asked to determine where the candidate sees him/herself going. In most cases, the candidate will not know the answer to that question. However, more often than not, just the activity of going through a person's strengths, weaknesses, attributes and achievements will enable them to see his or her future in a better light.

Two paths to profiling

There are two clear paths that career profiling can take. One is that the person being profiled has a clear idea of where he or she sees his or career going but does not know how to get there or the candidate has no set direction for his or her future and needs career profiling to determine which career path would best suit.

In the first instance, the process is much easier. The gap analysis is always the first step, but once this is complete, the process becomes more about career guidance and advising than pure profiling. This involves aiding the candidate with a Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) or skills development plan in order to get from A to B on a chosen career path.

The second profiling path is slightly more complicated, requiring the profiler to delve deeper into the candidate's aspirations. In terms of aspirations, the profiler should not be asking about earning possibilities, but rather investigating responsibilities, the environment the candidate wants to work in, the work roles he or she would be interested in, whether he or she wishes to work independently or in a team, etc. All of this information feeds into an educated career plan.

Intensive analysis

Career profiling is far more than a personal development plan (PDP). A PDP is specific to a particular company, indicating the route an existing employee should take to ascend the rungs of the organisation's internal ladder. A career profile is more about the individual than the company.

In simpler terms, a career profile entails doing a gap analysis to get the full picture, determining a future focus, providing career advice if the future focus is clear or building a greater profile and developing a future focus to work towards. Through this process, the candidate is given a better idea of his or her future within the current organisation, with a plan in terms of future growth.

For the individual, being in the wrong career may be the result of roles not being clearly defined or having changing as his or her career progressed (job profiles are organic), but this will mean that the individual will be unable to use his or her strengths to full capacity, leading to dissatisfaction.

From an organisational point of view, if career profiling is not conducted properly, the company will employ the wrong person for the job. This becomes a vicious negative cycle of recruiting the wrong person because the profile is wrong, while the employee is unhappy because he or she is not the right person for the job.

Profiles for people or positions

When profiling an individual, it is essential that the profile be built for a particular person, rather than for a position. Do not hire an employee and then create a profile for that person in that position because he or she happens to do it well; by doing this the person's true profile will not be drawn out, but rather a list of what the company wants the person to achieve, or what the person is already achieving.

When profiling for an organisation, the profiler must ensure that the profile is strategy driven and that it is linked to measurable performance indicators. To achieve this, each profile must be considered for its unique attributes and requirements; no two profiles should be the same.

When conducting career profiling for SARS managers, for example, it was essential to connect its diversity management to the management roles. In this instance, technical skills and how to harness the strengths of the broader staff complement, became key performance indicators. At the Institute of People Management (IPM), profiling was done for professional designations, determining the skills, knowledge and practical experience someone would need to have in order to register. At INSETA, the profiling was more in line with gaps already identified through a customer satisfaction survey and in line with change management.

When conducted effectively, career profiling greatly benefits the individual and the organisation. The result is an employee that is focussed, dedicated and aware of the areas that require skills development, whether through continuous professional development or formal studies, in order to advance in his or her career. Intrinsicly, people need to have purpose and meaning in life, this process facilitates finding that purpose.

ABOUT MARK ORPEN

With an undying entrepreneurial spirit, Mark Orpen founded IPD in 2000. His main area of operation is currently governance, while his primary responsibilities include governance, finance, strategy and marketing. Having completed a National Diploma in Marketing and Sales, another in Learning and Development and a National Higher Certificate in Occupationally-Directed Education, Training and Development Practices, Orpen has all the skills necessary to execute his duties as CEO of IPD.

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