Job Analysis and Job Design

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Job analysis is critical for most other human resource management activities and is considered the foundation of good HRM. This video will provide an overview of the job analysis process and the outcomes of job analysis. I will start with the end of job analysis, that is, the outcomes of job analysis as understanding what job analysis produces will help you better understand the process. The outcome of job analysis is two very distinct things, although they are generally included together in one document. This is the Job Description and the Job Specifications.

The job description includes some basics, like the job title, where if fits into the organization including who a person in this job would report to, and who they may supervise (if anyone). But the critical parts of the job description are the task, duties and responsibilities of the job. This describes what a person in this job does. It should also indicate the relative importance of each task, duty and responsibility as well as the proportion of an incumbent’s time spend on each. The job specifications are the qualities and requirements that a person performing the job must possess. This will include competencies such as knowledge, skills and abilities or other characteristics necessary to do the job successfully. This is critical information to have for employee selection, but also for training and employee development.

The process of Job Analysis collects the information required to produce the Job Description and Job Specifications. There are several potential source of information. The most common source is job incumbents. Since they are performing the job, they have detailed information about what the job entails. However, job incumbents often exaggerate what the job includes to make it sound more important or difficult than it actually is. This is not surprising given that the information provided during job analysis will be used for Job Evaluation, the process of determining levels of pay for jobs. So incumbent information is often balanced with information from the supervisors or managers who will also have detailed information about the job. Other sources may include observers, such as the job analyst, and for some service occupations customers may be a relevant source of information.
There are numerous methods for collecting the information. This includes:

1. interviews of incumbents and/or managers;
2. a diary or log kept by incumbents;
3. observation of incumbents performing the job;
4. or what are known as quantitative techniques that use questionnaires to collect information and provide scores on various dimensions.

The key advantage of questionnaires are that they provide a standardized method to ensure consistency and comparability of the information across many jobs.

One of the most commonly used quantitative methods is the Position Analysis Questionnaire or PAQ. This is designed to apply to a wide variety of jobs. It includes 194 questions about work behaviors, work conditions, and other job characteristics. The responses provide information on six dimensions:

1. **Information input** which describes how the employee gets the information required to do the job.
2. **Mental processes** such as the required processing of information and related decision making.
3. **Work output** such as the physical activities and the tools or other equipment used by the employee.
4. **Relationships with other people** both within and outside the organization that are required for job performance.
5. The **job context** including the physical and social environment in which the job is performed.
6. And finally any **other job characteristics** not included above.

These PAQ dimensions also provide a good summary of what should be included in any job description.

When is job analysis done? Typically the first step in filling a vacancy is to check that the job description is up-to-date and accurate. Jobs often change over time so this is very important. If it has changed significantly since the last analysis, then it may be time to do a new Job Analysis. Sometimes organizations may do a broad job analysis program including many, or all, jobs in the organization. This may be done if the company has been growing rapidly or experienced other major changes, such as introducing new product lines or moving into geographic markets. Additionally this may be the first step in a job redesign program.

Job analysis focuses on existing jobs and the information collected is used for many other HRM activities. One of these is Job Design or Job Redesign. These may be necessary for several reasons. As I noted earlier, new start-ups often go through a period of rapid growth in the first years. This requires a rapid expansion of the number of employees and the design of new jobs and the redesign of existing jobs. As the company grows quickly the entire job structure of the organization may be redesigned. But even stable companies may want to redesign jobs if they believe a different job structure would better meet their objectives.

Job design and redesign focuses on four key objectives that sometimes conflict with each other, so a balance is required. One objective designing jobs that are efficient and accomplish the work required with low costs and high productivity. This is the engineering aspect of job design.
But a single minded focus on efficiency will often lead to jobs that do not meet other objectives, such as designing jobs that are motivating. Historically, many manufacturing jobs were designed for maximum efficiency but this lead to jobs were employees did the same simple task repeatedly. Such jobs are monotonous and lead to employees becoming bored and unmotivated often resulting in high turnover. Designing jobs that motivate employees should:

1. require a variety of skills,
2. allow the employee to identify with a complete task
3. that has a significant impact on others,
4. and allows the employee some autonomy in how the task is completed.

Designing work into self-managed teams, already noted as one of the practices of high performance organizations, will also provide jobs that meet these requirements and are motivating to employees.

It is also important to design jobs with worker health and safety as a key objective. Jobs should be ergonomically designed giving consideration to both the physical and mental capabilities of the employees to avoid risk of injury, fatigue, burnout or isolation from others.

Having a job structure with well-designed jobs is important for the success of any organization.