

An assignment to undertake a competencies review for a metro industry client

Introduction and background



Our client had recently moved to the private sector and was facing significant organisational changes as a result of a major restructuring exercise and new, high pressured demands from its own major client.

One of the features of this shift to a new environment was that our client's organisation needed to create and fill a wide range of individual roles, as yet undefined, with related technical and behavioural requirements that would be essential for delivering services in a safety critical industry.

Our client's Trains Systems Division needed to understand the impact of the changes and demands on their organisation and to prepare for the adjustments that would be needed. We were delighted to be commissioned for the assignment.

Our task

In the rail and metro industries, defining and managing staff competency is essential. As our client appreciated, managing competence is at the core of any business that relies on people. Success is not all luck but comes from effort and considerable skill and the demonstration of particular behavioural characteristics relevant to the job concerned.

We designed, set up and implemented a competency management system for reviewing and defining the structure, requirements, activities and job types that would be necessary for the new division, including the requirement of each engineering level.

How we went about it

We put together a team of some of our most experienced rail and metro consultants, including some with technical engineering qualifications and backgrounds and others with HR track records.

The project started with a series of workshops for key managers and staff, to achieve a clear definition of the role and purpose of Train Systems and the larger organisation of which it formed part and designing a project programme. With an enhanced understanding of the business, we were able to carry out a risk assessment which would serve to inform our proposed methodology.

We were then in a position to make a presentation to top managers to explain the objectives, the proposed programme, the impacts on the business and the benefits that would be achieved as a result of the process. We rolled out a comprehensive programme covering the following key stages:

- Reviewing and defining the new individual roles required within Train Systems;
- Preparing job descriptions;
- Defining the competencies for each individual role;
- Defining the job evaluation processes;
- Reviewing and defining the core and support processes needed to fulfil each agreed role;
- Designing a new organisational structure;
- Reviewing the interfaces needed, with both internal and external organisations, and guidance on how to manage them;

- Setting up an awareness and communications programme for our client and its stakeholders, involving a series of workshops for managers and their teams.

We produced a Competency System Guide for managers which recorded all the relevant information within a single source. This provided a complete understanding of the competence that would be required for each role individually and the relevant criteria to assess technical and behavioural competencies, performance, knowledge and skill requirements and job evaluation outputs.

What we achieved

The benefits realised by our client included:

- The creation of a new, high performing organisation that was fit for purpose
- An organisation that only engaged the best performers
- Resilience and high morale for managers and team members
- A clear perception of how each job was linked to the objectives of the organisation
- The potential for increased time and cost effectiveness
- Support for conformity with regulatory and safety case requirements
- Enhanced mitigation of risk and safety critical factors
- Increased reliability and consistency of service delivery
- The best selection and recruitment processes
- The identification of outstanding performers