Conducting Job Analysis
Overview:
Job analysis continues to play an important role in the successful management of organizations. This report provides reasons for conducting job analysis on a regular basis, examines what information to collect, and highlights the differences in varying methodologies. Practical advice on conducting job analysis interviews and writing job descriptions is also included. Some material is reprinted with permission from ERI’s Distance Learning Center Compensation and Benefits textbook.

Why Conduct Job Analysis?
The goal of job analysis is to secure all necessary job data for a variety of human resource management functions. Stemming from a basic scientific management tool to address the selection, motivation, and training of the worker, early methods of job analysis shifted to include time and motion studies to improve industrial productivity. Since then, applications of job analysis have evolved to encompass roles in organizational planning and job design; recruitment, staffing, and development of employees; performance appraisals; grievance settlement; and compensation. This centrality of job analysis is illustrated in Figure 1.

For compensation purposes, job analysis serves as a prerequisite for evaluating jobs internally and conducting market-pricing comparisons prior to designing salary structures. Basic information about jobs is typically recorded as job descriptions, one of the many objectives of job analysis. The job descriptions, then, serve as guides for benchmarking jobs with market data and for slotting unique positions within an organization’s hierarchy. Failure to obtain complete and accurate job content information through expert analysis may result in imprecise job evaluation, potentially leading to increased costs or loss of talent. While it may be tempting to simply use self-reported job content as part of market pricing, compensation professionals require content derived from expert analysis.

Job knowledge is also required in a number of regulatory situations. The Civil Rights Act, the Equal Pay Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act are major legal reasons for conducting job analysis. Recently, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) 2010 Regulatory Agenda proposed a recordkeeping change that, if adopted, would require organizations to perform a classification analysis for each position, disclose that analysis to the job incumbent, and keep a file of the analysis for review by DOL Wage and Hour Division inspectors. A classification analysis requires specific information to determine if a job is considered exempt or nonexempt under the Fair Labor Standards Act. Job analysis methods can be tailored to incorporate such data collection. Considering the possibility of this recordkeeping change,
conducting job analysis may not only be a good idea in terms of human resource management, it may also be a way to aid compliance with FLSA requirements through proper job classification. The FLSA module in ERI’s Occupational Assessor® & Survey (OA) allows one to perform this type of classification analysis.

According to a WorldatWork Association survey\(^1\) of 1,149 members, approximately 60 percent of responding organizations indicated up-to-date documentation for most or nearly all jobs. The remaining organizations reported less than 60 percent of their jobs as documented and current. Of the members polled, only 8 percent update job descriptions on a set schedule (either annually or biannually), and nearly 80 percent update only when the job has significantly changed or when the job is officially evaluated.

If job analysis truly is the foundation for human resource management as experts in the field have suggested, why aren’t more organizations completing the documentation on a regular basis?

Some academics have proposed that traditional job analysis is not applicable to a number of newer jobs in today’s modern work environment that have become more fluid, affected by frequent changes of responsibilities, the existence of team-based settings, and technological advancement (Sanchez & Levine, 1999). Task-based notions of a “job” are being redefined as new methodologies of collecting job content and the required knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs), and other characteristics for employees to perform successfully are being implemented. The focus has shifted from a narrowly defined task checklist to an evaluation of the required skills and competencies of a job tailored to specific types of occupations. At the same time, many organizations continue to rely on traditional methods of job analysis as a successful management tool.

Scholarly debate aside, the immediate reality for human resource and compensation departments is that any method of job analysis takes time, effort, and money to execute, monitor, and review, which may deter some organizations from maintaining job documentation on a regular basis. However, understanding how jobs within your organization change over time can be accomplished by customizing job analysis methods for specific goals using efficient methods. As declared in the WorldatWork survey brief, “HR and compensation departments clearly have an opportunity to make job documentation practices more regular and proactive.”

Information to Be Collected

Job analysis drills into the underlying units of a job depending on the focus. The process breaks down a job into different components. By adjusting the scope of the analysis, job analysts can obtain specific information to fit the needs of their organization. The level of analysis may be broad or narrow depending on the data sought. The process may seek to obtain information about the work, the worker, and the context of the job.

The DOL established a simplified but complete model of obtaining information on work activities in 1946. The formula consists of what activities the worker performs, how he or she performs the activities, why he or she performs the activities, and the skill required to perform the activities. A subsequent revision by the DOL in 1972 expanded the formula to include five types of job descriptors; however, providing the what, how, and why of each task, as well as the total job, constitutes a functional description of work activities for compensation purposes.

For this report, we will highlight a model of job analysis based on the connection between the worker and the organization. Ideally, both parties contribute to the exchange, interacting in a mutually beneficial relationship. Employees give their time, talent, and effort in exchange for rewards, both extrinsic and intrinsic. In turn, organizations provide rewards to receive employee activities

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that will enable the organization to reach its goals. This model of analysis, known as the Systems Exchange Model (Figure 2), attempts to analyze and record the nature of these interactions and expectations.

Along the vertical dimension of the model is the employee-job relationship. An employee's KSAs (cell 1) are used in different activities, divided into physical, mental, and interactional categories (cell 3).

Discovering the organized and directed human activity of a job is at the core of job analysis. This process involves analyzing what is done in the job, as well as how it's done. What is also defined by the object on which the activity is exercised. Physical activities are the movements of the body required by the job and may include simple actions, such as sweeping the floor, or highly complex and precise motions, such as those of a surgeon or scientist. Observational activities rely on the senses of the employee to mentally or physically record something in the environment.

All tasks require some mental discretion as to process. This decision making may be simple and structured, but completing a task doesn't always go as planned. When this occurs, problem solving kicks in. A well-rounded job analysis considers the inherent decision making in proceeding with a task, as well as the necessary problem solving should an issue arise.

Employees interact with each other and customers through written and verbal communication. Interactions on the job can be observed in terms of who does the contacting, for what purpose, how often, and the variety of contacts. Interactions range from simple (an exchange of information) to complex (such as a negotiation).

The final vertical dimension involves employee rewards (cell 5) through compensation and job satisfaction, although the latter intrinsic reward is usually not recorded for job analysis purposes.

The horizontal dimension of the model represents the organization-job relationship. Every organization contributes resources and constraints (cell 2) for employees to carry out job activities (cell 3). Constraints constitute how a job must be performed within an organization. Outputs for this dimension are a product created or service performed by an employee (cell 4). The results can be defined in terms of quantity, quality, and time.

This model suggests that information can be collected on the purpose of the job (cell 4); the activities of the job (cell 3); the worker requirements of the job (cell 1); the organizational context of the job (cell 2); and the rewards of the job for the employee (cell 5).

For more information on the Systems Exchange Model, visit ERI Distance Learning Course #33 Conducting Job Analysis via www.eridlc.com.
Methods of Job Analysis

There is no single method of job analysis that will work for every organization in every situation. Methods may differ by the level of analysis, categories used to describe jobs, style of approach (inductive or deductive), sources of information, and ways of collecting data (qualitative or quantitative).

Descriptors of job content can be classified as either job-oriented or worker-oriented (McCormick, 1979). Traditional methods of job analysis focus on job tasks. In comparison, worker-oriented methods focus on descriptors to identify human attributes and behaviors to perform a job, also known as competencies.

Approaches to data collection may also be categorized as inductive or deductive. During an inductive approach, job information is collected prior to organizing descriptors into a framework. Conversely, a deductive approach utilizes descriptors within an established system, often accompanied by a scoring structure for reporting purposes.

Sources of information can range from job incumbents and their supervisors, to job analysts and groups of personnel trained as subject matter experts. Job incumbents tend to have the most complete and accurate information on job content as supervisors may or may not know the jobs of their subordinates. However, if supervisors are especially aware of the jobs, a great deal of time and money can be saved in the process.

Qualitative job analysis methods typically rely on direct observation and/or an interview process. These methods range from informal to highly structured and can be subjective as they depend on the objectivity and analytical ability of the analyst, as well as the information provided by job incumbents and other informants. To enhance reliability and validity, it is common practice to secure acceptance from both job incumbents and supervisors before the resulting job descriptions are considered final.

Quantitative job analysis methods, on the other hand, rely on prepared questionnaires to gather information using ratings of various types of job descriptors. Questionnaires may be completed by a job incumbent or used by an analyst during an interview. Organizations may choose to use general off-the-shelf questionnaires or to create a unique questionnaire for specific requirements.

The best-known quantitative approach to job analysis is the Position Analysis Questionnaire (PAQ). The position analysis questionnaire is a structured job analysis questionnaire that measures job elements. The PAQ was developed to analyze any job across all industries and can be used to produce a job evaluation score for compensation purposes.

Conducting a Job Analysis Interview

In determining the why, what, and how of a job, it’s best to start with questions regarding the what, then proceeding to the how, and finally, the why.

Some interview questions to consider are:

- What do you do? What activities do you perform on a daily basis? On a less-than-daily basis? (Try to group these together to pinpoint primary tasks.)
- How do you do these activities? (Try to determine the physical, observational, and mental aspects of the tasks.)
- What’s the result or purpose of your work? (Find this out for each of the tasks identified.)
- With whom do you come in contact when performing your job? What’s the purpose of the contact? Or, what do you do during the contact? How long does it last? How often? (Relate these contacts to the tasks.)
- What kinds of equipment or machines do you use in your work? What do you do with them?
• What knowledge, skills, and abilities are required to do your job?
• What policies and procedures do you follow in performing your job? Are there any other guidelines you use in your work?
• How does your supervisor assign work? How does your supervisor review the work you’ve done?
• Where do the things come from that you work on? What happens to the things you work on after you finish?

Writing Job Descriptions

A job description defines the job as it is being performed and typically includes additional sections for identification and performance requirements. Be sure to include identification information such as the job title, organizational unit, industry, company size, number of incumbents in the job, job number (if such a system applies), title and name of supervisor, and the analyst’s name.

The work performed section should begin with a job summary that describes the purpose and content of the job followed by a series of task statements using an active verb, the object of the task, and the purpose in the form of an infinitive phrase. Follow each task statement with a description of how the task is carried out in terms of the physical, observational, mental, and interactional requirements, as well as the percentage of total time it requires. Finding that task statements provide helpful information, many analysts write the job summary after completing the statements.

Another section of a job description includes job specification—the human attributes required by the job. Performance requirements may also be recorded. Lastly, a statement of the environment of the job, including the policies, supervision, and resources should be included.

Precise writing is a requirement of good job descriptions. The words used should have only one possible meaning and must accurately describe what’s being done. Terms should be specific and should employ language that’s as simple and direct as possible. This is especially helpful when job descriptions are written by different analysts. In these situations, having a central agency edit the final descriptions ensures coordination and consistency.

Summary:

Since most organizations pay employees on the basis of their jobs, having accurate knowledge of the content and context of jobs is critical. Typically, the greater the importance of the job (within the organization and in the marketplace), the greater the pay. The process for making these determinations is job evaluation. However, in order to evaluate jobs, they must be analyzed in a fashion that allows for direct comparison. This is at the heart of job analysis, and it’s the starting point for just about any human resource program.

References: