

Talent Management Solutions

Management Competencies

Development & Assessment

The challenges of maintaining excellent service provision are extremely important and developing and retaining key talent needs to be high on the agenda for any organisation. One organisation decided to tackle this challenge by partnering with McLaren Solutions ("McLaren") to develop and implement a competency framework for its management population. This gave staff a clear understanding of the competencies required to operate effectively at all management levels, and provided an online mechanism to assess individual performance and agree ongoing personal development.

Background & Objectives

The organisation has a diverse population with equally diverse service needs. This, coupled with an ongoing Strategic Change Programme, required a shift in management culture: embrace leadership rather than just focus on pure service management.

They recognised that a competency framework should underpin recruitment, induction/probation, performance & development review (PDR), Continuing Development and Succession Planning. In order to have the most impact, the organisation decided that the framework would form the basis of its management development programme for Strategic, Operational and Team Managers. The key objective of this project was to develop an agreed Management Competency Framework that could:

- Challenge managers at all levels
- Be assessed with a performance rating scale
- Support the Succession Planning scheme
- Reflect / encompass the organisational values
- Take account of 'new ways of working'
- Define the core management requirements over the next 5 years
- Support the implementation of Equality and Diversity
- Help align with the change in desired culture across the organisation

Key challenges

The organisation had a number of managers who, whilst being experts in their service areas, were not necessarily true service leaders.

The organisation has difficulty recruiting internally and externally to key posts.

Identification of successors was difficult in the existing structure.

A transparent way of supporting succession planning was needed.

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What was done?

In partnership with McLaren, the organisation embarked upon a Management Competency Project, which contained the following main phases:

Competency Profiling – A steering group made up from Heads of Service and the L&D team worked with McLaren to define a long-list of competency headings and definitions to ensure they were relevant to the organisation. McLaren's online Capability Profiler module was then used to rapidly prioritise the competencies by gathering opinions and comparisons from over 100 managers. The results of this exercise were distilled and presented back to the Steering Group, resulting in a set of 8 headings, each with a definition and a set of supporting statements.

Pilot Assessment Exercise – a selected group of Strategic and Operational Managers were asked to take part in a pilot exercise where they paired up with their line manager and conducted a one-to-one competency-based assessment using the McLaren Performance Reviewer module. Both a self-assessment and a line-manager assessment were conducted online, followed by a face-to-face meeting to discuss the results. As part of this exercise, feedback was gathered on the communication, content, process and online tool.

Framework Revision – following a review of the feedback questionnaires, and subsequent discussions with senior management, it became clear that different sets of competencies/supporting statements may be required for different management levels. The Project Team conducted a brainstorming session to discuss the resultant competency framework, the organisational values and the feedback from senior management. This resulted in a revised framework containing a set of competency clusters, related competencies and supporting statements which, following a trial with a representative group of managers, was approved by the Corporate Management Team.

Key outcomes

One of the key lessons learned has been how to ensure that the project had correct governance and that the results were given the best chance of success. The following steps were taken in order to achieve this:

- Staged approach – it was initially implemented with more senior managers
- Management Teams agreed / nominated managers to participate in 360-degree assessment
- Management Teams ensured internet accessibility was readily available
- All managers were required to attend half day training session
- Help and advice lines set up, manned by knowledgeable staff
- Regular up date reports provided to the Management Teams
- Interim evaluation on the framework was planned after 100 assessments had been completed

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What resources were required and who was involved?

Steering Group –Senior Managers were required to attend 2 x two-hour meetings while the framework was being developed. Other senior management involvement was obtained via existing management forums, therefore no additional resourcing impact.

Training – All managers taking part were required to attend a half-day training course. McLaren ran the first two of these sessions and the remainder were run internally.

Project Manager –Change Management Programme. A project manager worked internally to manage the logistics of the training, relationship with McLaren, internal communications.

Consultant - McLaren. A Project Manager drove the consultancy project to develop the competency framework, involving internal staff when necessary. The same project manager oversaw the piloting, training and then implementation of the assessment system.

Support/Advice Team – McLaren. Access to a team of client service advisers was provided by McLaren to act as the frontline for all enquiries/problems. These were either resolved or passed on to internal staff if the enquiry was more in-depth.

Impact and benefits

The Competency Profiling exercise was invaluable in gaining buy-in to the concept and structure of a management competency framework, as it allowed managers to rapidly identify and express which competencies were important to them. In addition, feedback from the pilot assessment process informed us that a 'one-size-fits-all' competency framework might not necessarily meet all the requirements of the organisation.

Whilst the detailed impact of the Management Assessment launch is still being analysed, the fact that a management competency framework had been carefully developed and successfully implemented with a large number of managers did contribute to the organisation being voted as an employer of choice.

What barriers were encountered and how would you do it better?

There was a general lack of awareness of the full process that managers and individuals should follow after they have completed their assessments – in the future, more marketing and internal promotion of the process would be needed.

The take-up of 360-degree feedback was relatively slow across the organisation, leading to a low-usage of the 360-degree licence – in the future, 360-degree feedback could a) be made mandatory at certain levels or b) promoted further at senior manager forums as a useful development tool. Feedback stated that those who did use the 360-degree process did find it very valuable.

There was no official deadline for completion of assessments and, therefore, no consequence of not meeting the deadline – in the future, deadlines should be set based upon either corporate or individual departmental needs for development of their managers.

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Adding value in the future

Subsequent to the first management assessment process conducted during 2007, the second is currently being scheduled for launch in early 2008. Going forward, it can easily be implemented either as a regular annual process or as an ad-hoc process where the requirement exists.

In addition to the central manager's programme, specific departments have expressed an interest in building upon the competency frameworks for lower level managers and utilising the McLaren Performance Reviewer to provide a tailored appraisal solution. The first of these to adopt the solution was a Customer Call Centre who implemented online competency-based appraisals with performance objectives built into the process as well.

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