Human resource systems (hr-systems)

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HR systems provide a number of key levers for sending signals to the organization about what really matters. One of these is the recruiting and selection lever, which, when linked to the organization's competency model, can screen candidates for hire or promotion on the basis of their alignment with the critical competencies linked to producing the organization's desired results.

The organization can leverage its competency model to great benefit if it audits the current capabilities of its workforce against the competencies and uses the results for talent planning as well as to guide investment in training and development activities that will help close critical competency gaps. A third key human resource lever is the organization's performance planning and management system.

This system needs to be tightly connected to the organization's competency model and can help to enhance performance particularly if each of the competencies in the model were selected in the first place because of their strong linkage to a particular result or result category (e. g. , employee, customer, investor). In the performance planning process it then simply becomes a matter of linking a particular individual's key results accountabilities (" the what") to the particular competencies (" the how") that he/she needs to demonstrate to produce expected results.

The final key human resource system lever relates to how the organization ties reward to the demonstration of competencies. An organization's willingness to " put itsmoneywhere its mouth is" can send a strong signal to its employees that competencies are taken seriously and " really matter. " In order to optimize their contribution to organizational performance andleadershipbranding, critical information on competencies also needs to be aligned and embedded within an organization's information and financial systems.

With regard to information systems, this translates into having informationtechnologyor enterprise guidance systems that help employees' better leverage competency-related information and applications. For example, individuals could access their own competency profile or those associated with other positions forcareerdevelopment planning, solicit 360-degree feedback, or access competency-linked online development planning software. Read about components of staffing

Managers could use it for resource allocation decisions or to determine optimal staffing for a specific kind of business unit or organizational initiative by matching competencies required by the nature of the work and competency capabilities of individuals within the organization. With regard to financial systems, it means having information on individual employee competence not only linked to its traditional HR system components but also with its business performance metrics and tracking capabilities.

This kind of linkage would enable management to be able to determine, for example, whether or not more return to the organization is occurring in those units where specific kinds of competency ratings are higher and to track the return on dollars invested to build competencies through increased productivity or lower costs that might result. Competency Expectations Must Be Differentiated to Fit with Varying Employee Roles yet Integrated from Top to Bottom Two aspects of the architecture of an organization's competency are particularly critical in enhancing branded leadership.

The first focuses on the extent to which competency expectations are similar and shared throughout the organization. All employees of the organization need to " be on the same page" and " pulling in the same direction" in order to optimize success. In competency model terms this can be accomplished by creating a competency architecture that highlights a limited number (typically 6-8) of core competencies that all employees (from the CEO to the mailroom clerk) share as an expectation to guide behavior.

Organizations need to allow some variation in competency expectations from one functional area or unit or job to another, but this variation comes into play only after the core competencies are addressed. As discussed earlier, these core competencies need to be selected carefully so that they focus on the most critical few areas of organizational capability that are essential in executing the strategy of the business. More specifically, organizations need to begin by determining the strategic organizational-level capabilities they will need to focus on to win.

Not surprisingly, the core competencies that these two organizations need to develop to create successful leadership brands must be different because their businessgoalsand approaches differ. An organization's competency model that is focused on providing direction to individuals regarding what they need to do and how must be aligned with the way in which the organization overall is trying to compete and win in its marketplace.

Putting more chips on fewer squares rather than trying to be broad, comprehensive, and " cover the board" will help employees focus more effectively on what's really important and will produce a competency model that looks more like the organization's, not like everybody else's. This kind of distinctiveness is key to creating leadership brand. The second aspect of a competency architecture that can enhance leadership brand distinctiveness involves defining each core competency in a manner that provides different expectation levels that match with the different demands of people's roles (e. g. ,. individual contributor, manager, executive).

The work of Novations Group Inc on " career stages" (Dalton and Thompson, 1986) is clearly consistent with this concept and provides one example of an approach for defining competencies that enables people to better see how the nature of the value-add to the organization shifts throughout various stages of their career development.

To illustrate how this principle of competency architecture would work in practice, consider the situation in which all employees might be expected to demonstrate " customer focus" because it is a core competency of the business; however, rather than defining this competency with a single set of four to five behavioral indicators that are applied to all employees at all levels (the " one-size-fits-all approach"), three separate sets of behavioral indicators would be developed to match with three broadly different roles (e. g. , individual contributor, mid-level manager, senior executive).

Mid-level managers might demonstrate customer focus by takingresponsibilityfor streamlining work processes to better fit with customer needs and by helping their direct reports understand the value proposition that they need to deliver to the customer. Senior executives may be expected to demonstrate their customer focus by ensuring that the organization is focused on serving the right customers and that organizational resources are allocated in ways that effectively support the business being able to deliver what it promises to customers.

Competency Expectations Must Be Aligned with the Beliefs of Senior Executives and Modeled in Their Personal Behavior and Commitment

For an organization's competencies to create a strong leadership brand that can help to enhance the value of the company, its senior executives must be a " walkingadvertisement" for the brand. Their walk has to match their talk and be consistently perceived that way by employees, customers, and investors. An organization that talks " accountability" cannot have top executives who " shift the blame and point fingers" when things go wrong.

An organization that prides itself on " flawless execution" cannot afford to miss on earning estimates or sales forecasts. An organization that boasts " quality is job one" cannot afford major product recalls. The way to help increase the likelihood of strong alignment between an organization's competency model and the on-the-job behavior of its senior executives is to make sure they are an integral part of the competency development process from the beginning.

The process needs to ensure that senior executives have the chance to articulate their personal beliefs and biases about effective leadership. These very personal beliefs and biases need to get aired, considered, and, as appropriate, incorporated into the organization's ultimate leadership competency model.

Benefits Of Competency Models That Build Leadership Brand

Many organizations have leadership competency models; however, few are leveraging the potential contribution that these models can make to create a distinctive leadership brand.

Branding is not just developing generic attributes, but developing attributes that lead to a set of specific outcomes and that are aligned with its strategy, core capabilities, and values. Employees of firms with branded leaders know what is expected of them, both in terms of how they work and in terms of what they must accomplish at work. Customers of firms with branded leaders receive a more consistent value proposition whether it is better service, higher quality, or performance, lower prices, or greater levels of innovation.

Investors see the intangibles of branded leaders and offer these firms a market value premium because they have confidence in the quality of leadership within the firm to deliver results again and again. When an entire leadership hierarchy gets focused on delivering the same results and has developed models identifying relevant attributes to deliver these results, the company gains and can sustain a competitive advantage.