Measuring Competencies of Information Professionals

by

Professor Dr. Szarina Abdullah
Faculty of Information Studies
Universiti Teknologi MARA
Shah Alam, Selangor

Seminar Kebangsaan Perpustakaan Malaysia
Anjuran Perpustakaan Sultanah Bahiyah, Universiti Utara Malaysia
Berjaya Beach Resort, Langkawi
25027 May 2004
1. The Significance of Measurement & Evaluation

We cannot manage what we cannot measure.

John Young, former CEO, Hewlett-Packard

- A very important part of managerial functions,
- Managers need to know the performance of staff,
- Good performance needs rewards,
- poor one needs corrections & improvements,
- Accountability of every task is necessary,
- Managers are responsible for staff performance.
Why do we evaluate?

• Good decision-making need data & evidences.
• Allocating resources.
• Reward good performances.
• Correct mistakes; avoid past mistakes.
• Improve performances.
• Plan for better future.
• Select the better and the best.
• Compare with the best.
• Strive to do better.
Functions of management

- Evaluate
- Correct
- Control
- Plan
- Organize
- Communicate
- Coordinate
- Motivate
Performance measurement & evaluation is an essential management tool. It may be implemented in a variety of ways. It is multidimensional in nature. Each method has advantages as well as disadvantages.
2. Principles in Measurement & Evaluation

• Both an art and a science.

• Evaluation - an art of applying the science of measurement tools & techniques to make decisions affecting people’s performance, status and future career.

- VALIDITY use the right tool for the purpose
- RELIABILITY Consistency
- FAIRNESS Impartiality
- FOCUS on Improvements not Punishment
- FORMATIVE & SUMMATIVE
- TRANSPARENCY
Validity

- Appropriate for the function
- Does what is supposed to do
- Usable for the purpose

Is it valid to compare a rabbit with a bird?
Reliability

- You can trust it to act/behave the way you expect.
- Can be replicated and obtain results similar to the original.
- Consistency
- Replicability
General vs. Specific

- He is a good man.
- Gives 10% income to charity
- Active in PIBG
- Spends time with family
- Loves to read & share knowledge
- Helps neighbors
3. COMPETENCY: Definitions

1. The generic knowledge, skills, or attitude of a person, related to effective behavior as demonstrated through performance.

2. A behavior, or set of behaviors that describe excellent performance in a particular work context.

3. One’s faculty of doing things appropriately, based on one’s abilities. ABILITY – inherent resources, intellectual & physical in humans which may be actualised in everyday practices.

COMPETENCE

Knowing what (K) + Knowing how to (skills)

ABILITY + ATTITUDES

ACTION

POTENTIALS
No shortage of literature on competencies, Very few studies on Measuring Competencies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Qualities</th>
<th>Responsible &amp; reliable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Works well with others in a team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KM competencies</td>
<td>Internet technologies skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Able to manage value-added information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Able to acquire, retrieve, analyse &amp; disseminate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Managerial skills</th>
<th>Able to solve problems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business analysis skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>Able to communicate research findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Speak &amp; write English proficiently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creative skills &amp; use of graphic software</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Rehman’s Study 1997: Special Library Professionals in Malaysia**

*Competencies for first entry level professionals:*
50 Top & Middle managers of special libraries & info. agencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FOUNDATION KNOWLEDGE</th>
<th>FOUNDATION SKILLS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Structure of organ. &amp; the role of info. service in the organ.</td>
<td>1. Organisation of materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Proactive info. services</td>
<td>2. Info. Outreach, current awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Establish vitality of info services in the eyes of top executives &amp; key R&amp;D personnel</td>
<td>3. Use of ICT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Mission, goals, objectives of the organ.</td>
<td>5. Info. Manipulating &amp; packaging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Policies &amp; procedures affecting info.</td>
<td>6. Time management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Basic subject concepts &amp; terminology used in primary areas of users</td>
<td>7. Abstracting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Planning, decision making, problem-solving, organising, marketing, budgeting &amp; cost analysis…</td>
<td>8. Data gathering, analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Newspaper clippings &amp; press releases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. Supervising, assigning, organizing, monitoring, directing, appraising, reporting…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18. Editing &amp; publishing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Measuring Competencies

- Measuring competencies is just a portion of the whole integrated scheme of Performance Management (PM).

- PM is a process that includes planning, managing, motivating, evaluating & rewarding performance.

**ACTION PLAN:**

1. Identify the desired outcomes of every task. One task at a time.

2. Identify the level of competencies: beginner, middle / supervisory, manager, leader.

3. Prioritize: ‘need to have’, ‘nice to have’.

4. Each staff understands what is expected / desired outcomes.

5. Individuals & teams align their behavior to meet expectations.

6. Establish SMART objectives for each task.
**Specific**
**Measurable**
**Achievable**
**Realistic**
**Time-based**

---

**Expected outcomes**

1. Users have 24 x 7 access to online information without breakdown.
2. Ensure security of data at all time.
3. Implement user-friendly interface, enabling fast access.
4. Provide training & assist users in efficient use of new applications.

---

- What are the knowledge and skills needed to achieve the above results?
- What instruments to be used for measuring performance accurately?
  - What rewards are given when the outcomes are achieved?
  - What actions are taken when outcomes are not achieved?
**ILL manager – expected outcomes**

1. Users have the requested items within 3 days (in Malaysia) / within 10 days (from overseas).

2. Establish & maintain good working relationship with other libraries / info. Agencies.

3. Conduct research on ILL users’ satisfaction & quality service.

4. Train subordinates in courtesy & efficient customer service twice a year.

5. Plan and manage budget for ILL.

- **What are the knowledge and skills needed to achieve the above results?**
- **What instruments to be used for measuring performance accurately?**
  - **What rewards are given when the outcomes are achieved?**
  - **What actions are taken when outcomes are not achieved?**
Goal: Save the time of the reader

• **Inputs and processes**
1. Materials are shelved & located at the right place.
2. Provide clear, accurate & simple signage to assist users.
4. Have ILL service within 3 days.
5. Implement user-friendly OPAC.
6. etc……
## 5. CHALLENGES

- **Measurement** is a science - accuracy, specificity, reliability, validity.

- **Evaluation** is an art of applying the science of measurement in the performance of people / product / services.

- Evaluation is a political activity; hence many critics & debates.
  - Communication & understanding among staff are critical.
  - The overall goal, mission & objectives of the organisation need to be appreciated by staff.
  - Each staff must be accountable for the outcomes of the given task.

- Transparency & Good Governance are needed.

- Reduce subjectivity: use evidences and data in decision-making.
Priority of Service
(users’ survey - Broadbent 1993)

1. Provision of up-to-date books, journals, and other information sources
2. Quality of information services and products (reliability, currency, etc.)
3. Inter-library loan service
4. Timely delivery of products and services
5. Understanding of users’ information needs
6. Access to databases (online and CD-ROM)
7. Quality of staff assistance and support to users
8. Range of material in collection (e.g. subject areas)
9. Gaining top management support
10. Servicing all sections of the Department
11. Competence and qualifications of staff
REFERENCES


Thank you for your attention & response